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# Keeping the Faith: Douglas Southall Freeman, 1886-1953. (Volumes I and II).

John R. Peacock III

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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**Keeping the faith: Douglas Southall Freeman, 1886–1953.  
(Volumes I and II)**

**Peacock, John R., III, Ph.D.**

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Keeping the Faith:  
Douglas Southall Freeman.  
1886-1953

Volume I

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

Department of History

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of the life and career of Douglas Southall Freeman (1886-1953), whose careful scheduling of every minute of every day allowed him to pursue two full-time careers -- one as a historian and one as editor of a major daily newspaper. In both occupations his views were shaped by the traditional values he acquired in his youth -- religious conviction, reverence for heroes, devotion to duty, self-control, fortitude, industry, thrift.

Growing up in Virginia during the era of the Confederate celebration, Freeman came to admire one hero above all others -- Robert E. Lee, a man whose character best exemplified his own moral values. In his Pulitzer prize-winning biography, R. E. Lee, he painted a vivid portrait of a moral hero. He followed up Lee with a study of the high command of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee's Lieutenants was his personal favorite among his books and represented his contribution to the training of a new generation of American soldiers. His last major historical work, George Washington never achieved quite the level of acclaim from either the reading public or the critics that Lee and Lee's Lieutenants did, but it constituted another monumental portrait of a moral hero for Americans.

In 1915 Freeman became editor of the Richmond News Leader, a position he held for 34 years. In state politics

he was an independent Democrat who consistently, if cautiously, opposed Virginia's political machine. In national politics he considered himself to be a liberal for the first two decades of his editorship. By his own definition of the term, he was perhaps a life-long liberal, but after 1935 his insistence on fiscal conservatism and limited federal power no longer placed him in the liberal camp. Despite his growing opposition to the tax and spend policies of the New Deal, he endorsed each of Franklin Roosevelt's bids for re-election, primarily because he trusted FDR's experienced hand in guiding the nation's foreign policy. He soon lost faith in Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, and openly endorsed Republican Dwight Eisenhower for President in 1952.

CHAPTER I  
THE FAITH OF THE FATHERS

The first crimson streaks of dawn were breaking through the eastern sky over Petersburg, Virginia as the young Confederate soldier nodded on the fire-step of the trench. Private Walker Burford Freeman of the 34th Virginia Infantry, Wise's Brigade, was on watch relief this penultimate day of July, 1864. As he looked sleepily to the north, an enormous explosion suddenly shattered the morning calm. He watched as "a great column of earth shot up like a huge water spout, and finally at the top, breaking asunder as it were, showed a tremendous mountain of smoke, with tongues of fire licking out, and fell back to earth." Union troops, in a daring attempt to achieve a major penetration of the Southern defenses, had detonated a mine underneath a portion of the Confederate line and were now rushing into the crater formed by the explosion. Walker Freeman was proud of the manner in which his veteran comrades of the Army of Northern Virginia quickly rallied from their initial shock. With the aid of artillery, they kept the disorganized attackers at bay until later in the morning when General William Mahone's Division launched a counterattack that repaired the ruptured line and ended the

"Battle of the Crater."<sup>1</sup>

Thirty-nine years later another young Virginian looked on with pride as Mahone's men again charged the Crater. Walker Freeman's 17-year-old son, Douglas Southall Freeman, had accompanied his father, as he often did, to a reunion of Confederate veterans. This reunion of the men of Mahone's Division on November 6, 1903 culminated in a re-enactment of the Battle of the Crater. The festivities prior to the re-enactment were typical of the events associated with what Gaines M. Foster has styled the celebration of the Confederacy. The City of Petersburg took a holiday for a festival that featured a parade of veterans. A Richmond newspaperman remarked that the Cockade City "did herself proud" and noted that if there were a building along the line of march that was not decorated, "it was so hidden by the yards of bunting and dozens of flags about it, that its solitary shame could not be seen." About 2,500 men marched in the parade, which commenced shortly after noon. Leading the column were mounted police and a platoon of police on foot, followed by the chief marshal and his staff. Then came various Virginia militia units with their bands and the different camps of the United Confederate Veterans, led by the R. E. Lee Camp of Richmond. The Petersburg Fire Department brought up the rear. As the throng of spectators

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<sup>1</sup>Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs of Walker Burford Freeman, 1843-1935" (typed MS), Virginia Historical Society, 42-43.

cheered the marchers, the veterans of Mahone's Brigade stopped at the residence of General Mahone's widow in order to pay their respects to that lady and her family as well as to the widow and family of Colonel Daniel Welsiger, the officer who had led their gallant charge almost 40 years before. After lunch, a stirring speech and a prayer, 20,000 people gathered on the field of the Crater for the re-enactment. While the militia simulated musketry and artillery fire, the veterans began running up the hill toward the Crater. "But," observed the Richmond correspondent, "their running days were over. . . . Thirty-nine years had passed and they were now content to take the redoubt in peace, and were as reluctant to run to-day as were the Yankees to meet them when real Yankees were there." Although a few hardy souls ran all the way to the rim of the Crater, most completed the "charge" at a walk.<sup>2</sup>

Douglas Freeman was deeply moved by the sight of these old men as they climbed the slope. Afterward he saw some of them in front of a Petersburg hotel "and observed that a few were lame and some were blind and they all were not far from the end of their course." He thought to himself "that if nobody wrote the history of that great army, those men would be cheated of their place in history," and it was then that

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<sup>2</sup>Gaines M. Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913 (New York, 1987); Richmond Times-Dispatch, Nov. 7, 1903.



he resolved to write the story.<sup>3</sup>

The months following the Battle of the Crater had a dramatic impact on Walker Freeman's life and, through him, on the life of his son Douglas. Although battling a severe case of malaria, Private Freeman served through the siege of Petersburg without a single day's absence from duty. During this period of agonizing trench warfare he first encountered that "great and good man," General Robert Edward Lee. Freeman was walking with a comrade on the Baxter Road when they met the General, mounted on Traveller. Lee drew rein and inquired how the men were getting along in the trenches. "He was cordial in his greeting," Freeman recalled, "and remarked that he hoped we were not suffering severe discomforts." At Farmville, during the retreat from Petersburg in April of 1865, the young private again had a close encounter with his beloved commander. Freeman was almost within arm's reach of General Lee and "noticed that he was very careful not to ride over, or up against, any of the men."<sup>4</sup>

Walker Freeman's life-long reverence for General Lee was matched only by his admiration of and affection for the men of his own company. He called them "the very best fellows who ever lived" and believed that they "proved

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<sup>3</sup>Douglas S. Freeman (DSF) to Louis V. Naisawald, July 2, 1946, Douglas Southall Freeman Papers, Library of Congress (cited hereafter as DSFP-LC), Box 71.

<sup>4</sup>DSF, typed statement, Feb. 9, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 22; Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 44, 49.

themselves to be true heroes." Though he admitted "there were some black sheep," he thought "they seemed to do as well as you could have expected of them." He "loved every one" of his comrades and was with them to the end at Appomattox, when the men of the 34th Virginia tore up their battleflag and distributed its fragments rather than permit its surrender.<sup>5</sup>

The 21-year-old Freeman made the short trip from Appomattox to his home in Bedford County armed with a philosophy of life that one of his sons later described as "a philosophy of optimism, of equanimity, with just a trace of stoicism toward the things of life as they affect yourself." Although he did not "regard war as a necessary thing, or in any sense a good thing" and thought that "General Sherman's definition of it is true," Freeman acknowledged that the Civil War had been a valuable experience for him:

First of all it turned my thoughts to God in remembrance of the many mercies he had bestowed in bringing me safely through the countless dangers through which I had come. Then I thought how it had disciplined my life as it probably could never otherwise have been done. I had learned the law of obedience and could now see its momentous importance, just as my parents had tried to teach me. I had learned the habits of promptness in acknowledging responsibility, and had been trained to respond without hesitation or mental reservation to the call of duty. I had gained a healthful knowledge and a profound

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 20; Clipping, unidentified newspaper, [1925], DSFP-LC, Box 4.

admiration for the meaning of patriotism.... We loved the Confederacy. I had gained in physical strength and manhood. . . . Finally it had given me a self confidence that I believe I could never have had. . . . I was sure that I could never have a harder time than I had had. Hunger, fatigue, disappointment I had had; none of these things had any terrors for me.<sup>4</sup>

In many respects Walker Freeman's wartime experiences served to reaffirm and strengthen beliefs long held by the Freeman family. He was descended on his father's side from a long line of pioneer preachers. His earliest American ancestor on the paternal side was Edmond Freeman, who left England for Massachusetts about 1625. The first of Edmond's descendants to settle in Virginia was Rev. James Freeman, who moved to Bedford County in the 1740s. His son was also named James and also became a Baptist minister. Richard Freeman (1780-1852), the third generation of the family to live in Bedford County, did some preaching and farmed near the Meadows of Goose Creek. He married Catherine Hurt, daughter of Garland Hurt of Bedford. Richard and Catherine's eldest child, Garland Hurt Freeman (1809-1857), married twice, the second time to Thermuthis Burford of Amherst County. In Garland Freeman were combined the traditional family characteristics of piety, dedication to work and a subtle sense of humor. He was an able farmer and long a Justice of the peace. To a descendant Garland

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<sup>4</sup>Allen W. Freeman to Walker B. Freeman, Aug. 26, 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 121; Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 53.

Freeman exemplified the family's "persistent puritanism." The Freemans "adhered to puritanical ideals with a tenacity" despite the marriage of successive generations to women with less stern Virginia traditions. Garland Freeman's wife Thermuthis, for example, was descended from the Rucker, Duval and Tucker families.<sup>7</sup>

Garland's son Walker also married into the more relaxed Virginia tradition. Leaving the disordered family tobacco farm in 1867, he moved to the nearby town of Lynchburg. There he engaged in the wholesale grocery business. One day two women came into the store soliciting contributions for Baptist church work. The younger of the two, Bettie Allen Hamner, "was not quite twenty, but perfect in face, fashion and form." Walker gave the dollar requested, even though it was "about three times as much as he could afford." After the ladies had left, his partner asked him: "How could you possibly give that much?" He replied: "Well, you see that girl -- I'm going to marry her." Walker and Bettie became better acquainted by appearing together in a church drama, and soon afterward he began boarding with Bettie's mother. On January 8, 1874, Walker Freeman made good his vow and married Bettie Hamner. Bettie, born in Appomattox County in

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2; DSF, typed statement, Feb. 9, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 22; DSF, "Something of the Freeman Family" (typed MS, Aug. 6, 1908), DSFP-LC, Box 22; Anne B. Freeman, "The Bedford Freemans: A Puritan Family in Virginia," quoted in John Lewis Gignilliat, "The Thought of Douglas Southall Freeman" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1968), 4, 6.

1853, was the daughter of James Southall and Mary Chambers Hamner. She had wide relations among the Allen, Watson, Ballard and Southall families of Midland Virginia. A granddaughter commented: "She was of old, old Virginia stock in which there was not a touch of puritanism," and, in fact, her father "despised puritans and their ways."<sup>9</sup>

Douglas Southall Freeman was the final product of this blend of Puritan and Cavalier. Walker and Bettie were already the parents of three sons when Douglas was born on Sunday morning, May 16, 1886. He later remarked in jest that "I was meant to be a girl, my mother thought, and I had a hard job as a youngster proving that I was a boy rather than a girl but in the end, I think, she was satisfied."<sup>10</sup>

Douglas' arrival coincided with a downturn in the family's economic fortunes. In 1880 Walker Freeman established W. B. Freeman Dry Goods and added a shoe department soon afterwards. When he realized that the shoe department was prospering nicely at the same time that he was losing money on his retail dry goods operation, he sold his business, rented another store and ordered a stock of shoes. However, the purchasers of his dry goods business defaulted on their payment, and before he sold a single pair

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<sup>9</sup>DSF, "Something of the Freeman Family"; Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, "Reflections," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Jan., 1986), 25; Anne B. Freeman, "The Bedford Freemans," quoted in Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 21.

<sup>10</sup>DSF to Mrs. William P. Danforth, Dec. 29, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 110.

of shoes, Walker Freeman was bankrupt. Desperate to support his family, he took a bookkeeping position with a wholesale shoe company. Shortly after the birth of Douglas, the family left their brick home on upper Main Street and moved in with a widowed relative of Mrs. Freeman. Fortunately, in February of 1887, Walker Freeman landed a job as general agent for the New York Life Insurance Company. He was to hold this position until his death in 1935. Although it was never to make him wealthy, it was to provide a secure income for his family and offer his four sons opportunities that he had never enjoyed himself.<sup>10</sup>

Walker Freeman's Puritan faith, with its emphasis on trust in God and the value of hard work, saw him through war and economic hardship and served as an example to his sons. Although his wife came from a family with different traditions, Bettie Freeman was also a devout and active Christian. Her son Allen Weir Freeman recalled that his mother's religious belief was "deep and real and was exhibited in everything she did or said, but she was not bigoted or intolerant. Her religion was her rule of life rather than the profession of a particular set of beliefs." Not surprisingly, then, religion played a key role in the life of the Freeman family. Walker Freeman became a deacon

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<sup>10</sup>Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 58; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas" (handwritten MS, 1953), DSFP-LC, Box 120, pp. 4-5; DSF, typed statement, Feb. 9, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 22.

in Lynchburg's First Baptist Church and also served as superintendent of the Sunday school. Both he and his wife taught Sunday school classes, while their boys attended classes for their proper age group. The family then came together for worship at the preaching service. Though there was generally no family prayer service or Bible reading on Sunday afternoon, all sports were forbidden except for a walk, usually with Grandfather Hamner. The youngsters were excused from Sunday evening services. As the youngest child, Douglas was especially close to his parents and was perhaps more strongly influenced by their religious values than were the other boys. While Bettie Freeman was pregnant with Douglas, she heard the evangelist Dwight Moody preach in Lynchburg. Inspired, she determined that if her child were a boy he would become a minister. By the time Douglas was four or five years old, Bettie and Aunt Mary (his "mammy") had him standing on a kitchen chair preaching "sermons" against the evils of liquor and tobacco.<sup>11</sup>

Next to a strong religious faith, the most pervasive influence in the Freeman family was remembrance of the Confederacy. As a small boy in Lynchburg, Douglas could have sat on the knee of one of Lee's lieutenants, for one of the town's most prominent citizens was General Jubal Anderson Early. Yet when young Douglas saw the General

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<sup>11</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 7, 12-13; Cheek, "Reflections," 38.

approaching, he crossed to the other side of the street. His brothers had told him that the crusty old bachelor ate little boys for breakfast, and one look at the tobacco-chewing "Old Jube" must have been convincing proof. Perhaps it was just as well that Douglas passed up his chance to meet Early, for the General, "unpardoned, unrepentant, unreconstructed," represented a different attitude toward Confederate defeat than that which prevailed in the Freeman household.<sup>12</sup>

While Walker Freeman's road from Appomattox to Lynchburg ran through the family tobacco farm, Jubal Early's took a winding path of self-imposed exile in Mexico, Cuba and Canada. In 1869 Early resumed the practice of law in Lynchburg, but he devoted much of his time to bitter denunciations of Yankees, blacks and, above all, Southerners, such as James Longstreet, who had "deserted" the Lost Cause by urging sectional reconciliation. In the 1870s he emerged as the leader of a coalition of Virginia groups that attempted to define and control the Confederate tradition. Early and his fellow Virginians, working largely through the Southern Historical Society, developed an interpretation of the war which emphasized that secession was a constitutional act, that slavery was not the cause of

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<sup>12</sup>Pocahontas Wight Edmunds, Virginians Out Front (Richmond, 1972), 382; Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, "Love of a Lifetime: Douglas Southall Freeman and the Writing of R. E. Lee," talk before the Civil War Round Table of Richmond, Va., Sept. 12, 1985.



the conflict, that the South lost only because of the North's overwhelming numbers and resources and General Longstreet's failure at a critical moment of the decisive Battle of Gettysburg, and that the Confederacy produced matchless military heroes in Stonewall Jackson and, above all, Robert E. Lee. These points became generally accepted parts of the Confederate tradition, but most Southerners rejected the efforts of Early and his comrades to keep alive the passions of the war and revitalize the Confederate past. By the mid-1880s a majority of Southerners had come to terms with defeat and accepted reunion with the North even while celebrating the Confederacy. Walker Freeman's views accorded much more closely with those of the men who led the Confederate celebration than with those of Early and the Virginia coalition, and he became an active and enthusiastic participant in the celebration.<sup>12</sup>

Walker had fond memories of life on the farm in the days before the war. He recalled the beauty of its setting, with the Blue Ridge "near enough to be plainly visible, and yet far enough to give the coloring and contour a dreamy tint that lulls one into thoughts of the almightiness of God and the wonders of His handiwork." The farm of 301 acres, including woodland, "was of the middle class" and was "sufficient for the ample maintenance of a large family in a

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<sup>12</sup>Millard Kessler Bushong, Old Jube: A Biography of General Jubal A. Early (Boyce, Va., 1955), 284-99; Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 47-63.

style of living that was in keeping with their standing in good society, and also to provide for the education of the children." When Walker returned years later to find the once carefully cultivated fields "grown up in forest, or wrapt in jungle," he must have felt a twinge of sadness. Yet, characteristically, he was philosophical: "Nature works out its immutable plans regardless of us mortals." And unlike Early and the other leaders of the Confederate revitalization movement, he never sought a return to the past. In later years he expressed satisfaction that he was not like those who regretted that things were not as they used to be: "Everything has improved thank God, materially, educationally, morally and religiously. These are the best times I ever saw, and I thank God."<sup>14</sup>

He had unpleasant recollections of the Reconstruction period. His resentment of Northern military rule was no doubt compounded by a personal encounter with an officer of the occupation forces whom he suspected of seeking to secure a bribe. He cited this officer as an example of "the class of men who were administering 'justice' in those dark days." These memories of postbellum Radical Republican rule made him a confirmed Democrat in politics, but they did not translate into the bitter denunciation of Northerners that

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<sup>14</sup>Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 1, 11, 14; Walker B. Freeman to DSF, May 6, 1905, Douglas Southall Freeman Collection, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University (hereafter cited as DSFC-JHU).

was characteristic of Early and the Virginia coalition. An admonition that he later gave to his son Douglas typified his attitude toward his former foes:

Never depreciate the adversary. What honor was there for a Confederate, if he was supposed to be fighting a coward? They were not cowards, those men of the North. Indeed, there never was a greater army in the world than the Army of the Potomac, save one, which modesty forbids me to mention.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Walker Freeman also rejected the bitter anti-black attitudes of Early and his followers. Though certainly not a racial liberal by modern standards, his attitude toward blacks was one of benevolent paternalism. He recalled the life of the Negro on his father's farm as "a most happy one" that was "absolutely free from care." He maintained that the slaves' "wants were all provided for, and they had the protection and sympathy of the owners." Yet despite this view of slavery as a benign institution, he "always regarded slavery as a curse" and considered its abolition as "one of the happy outcomes of the war between the states."<sup>16</sup>

A strong religious belief steeled by civil war and economic distress, a reverence for the Confederacy and its heroes, especially Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, and an acceptance of the war's outcome with no

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<sup>15</sup>Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 55; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 16; DSF, "An Address" [before the Civil War Round Tables of Richmond and Chicago, May 7, 1953], Civil War History (March, 1955), 14.

<sup>16</sup>Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 13.

bitterness toward Northerners or blacks and with optimism for the future of the reunited nation -- these were the fundamentals of the faith Walker Freeman taught his sons. Throughout his life, Douglas Freeman acknowledged the great influence of his father. Douglas called him one of the three men to whom he owed "more for my bent in formative years than to any others." There can be little doubt that his father's influence was greatest of all. "I do not know why it is," Douglas once wrote of Walker, "but the older I get the more does his influence on me become. More do I owe to him than I realize now or ever will realize." He usually noted his father's birthday in his diary. "Nobody will ever know how much of my best self I owe him," he wrote on the centennial of Walker's birth. Two years later Douglas Freeman penned perhaps his most succinct acknowledgment of his father's influence on his own life and work: "My father: I have tried to keep the faith!"<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Diary of DSF, Aug. 22, 1948, Aug. 28, 1943 and Aug. 28, 1945, DSFP-LC; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, Aug. 28, 1945, DSFP-LC, Box 61.

## CHAPTER II

### A RICHMOND BOYHOOD

Five-year-old Douglas Freeman stared out of the coach in wide-eyed wonderment as the train steamed across the bridge spanning the James River. Before him lay the City of Richmond, proud capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia and once capital of the Confederate States of America. It was March, 1892, and Walker Freeman, with his business expanding in eastern Virginia, was moving his family to the city he had fought to defend 30 years before. When the Freemans arrived at their new residence at Mrs. Hunter's boarding house at Tenth and Capitol Streets, Walker showed Douglas the great monument to George Washington across the street in Capitol Square. The small boy marveled at the size of man and horse. Indeed, he marveled at everything in this city that was to be his home ever after and was to do much to shape his life and career.<sup>1</sup>

To the experienced eyes of the novelist Henry James, who visited Richmond a few years after the Freemans' arrival, the city seemed "simply blank and void." James understood the South's psychological need to come to terms with defeat: "The collapse of the old order, the humiliation of defeat, the bereavement and bankruptcy involved,

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<sup>1</sup>DSF to Bettie Freeman, May 8, 1905, DSFC-JHU; Walker B. Freeman, "Memoirs," 58; DSF, typed statement, Feb. 9, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 22.

represented, with its obscure miseries and tragedies, the social revolution the most unrecorded and undeclared, in proportion to its magnitude, that ever was; so that this reversion of the starved spirit to the things of the heroic age, the four epic years, is a definite soothing saive."

What bothered James about Richmond was the lack of beauty and significance in the city's celebration of its "heroic age." As he toured Richmond's Confederate shrines, James was struck by their "trivialization of history" and "inaccessibility to legend." He was particularly appalled by the Museum of the Confederacy, located in the former Confederate White House. "It fills the whole large house . . . and one assuredly feels, in passing from room to room, that, up and down the South, no equal area can so offer itself as sacred ground," he wrote. "Tragically, indescribably sanctified, these documentary chambers that contained, so far as I remember, not a single object of beauty, scarce one in fact that was not altogether ugly (so void they were of intrinsic charm), and that spoke only of the absence of means and of taste, of communication and resource." The museum's "sorry objects" brought home the low esthetic level of the Confederate celebration. James noted that "the social revolution had begotten neither song nor story -- only, for literature, two or three biographies of soldiers, written in other countries, and only, for music, the weird chants of the emancipated blacks." James

observed in Richmond only two things of beauty. One was the "little old lady" who received him at the Confederate Museum, "a person soft-voiced, gracious, mellifluous, perfect for her function . . . with her perfectly 'sectional' good manners, and that punctuality and felicity, that inimitability . . . of the South in her." The other was the equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue. Yet even the Lee monument evoked in James thoughts of the esthetic poverty of Richmond:

I felt brought round again to meeting my first surprise, to solving the riddle of the historic poverty of Richmond. It is the poverty that is, exactly, historic: once take it for that and it puts on vividness. The condition attested is the condition -- or, as may be, one of the later, fainter, weaker stages -- of having worshipped false gods. As I looked back, before leaving it, at Lee's stranded, bereft image, which time and fortune have so cheated of half the significance, and so, I think, of half the dignity, of great memorials, I recognized something more than the melancholy of a lost cause. The whole infelicity speaks of a cause that could never have been gained.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Henry James's critical eye saw only the material objects associated with the Confederate celebration. It was the celebration's ritual activities that gave it much of its meaning for impressionable young Douglas Freeman. In fin de siècle Richmond, these activities consisted primarily of funerals of prominent Confederates, the dedication of statues of Confederate greats and reunions of Confederate

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<sup>2</sup>Henry James, The American Scene (London, 1907), 383-87, 394.

veterans.

One of Douglas' earliest memories was of the reinterment of the body of Jefferson Davis in Hollywood Cemetery in May, 1893. The train bearing Davis' body from New Orleans arrived in Richmond about one o'clock in the morning. A procession of veterans and townspeople escorted the body by torchlight from the train station to the capitol, where Davis was to lie in state before interment in Hollywood. Little Douglas viewed the scene from the boarding house across the street and heard the Stonewall Band of Staunton playing "How Firm a Foundation."<sup>3</sup>

The dedication of the Lee statue took place two years before the Freemans moved to Richmond. Although grander than subsequent unveilings, it set the pattern for such occasions. When the statue, sculpted in Paris, arrived in Richmond in four sections, more than 9,000 citizens helped pull the crates from the Elba Station to the site chosen for the monument at Franklin and Allen Streets. Women and children joined in and pulled two of the crates themselves. The unveiling ceremonies were held three weeks later on May 29, 1890. Events began with a parade that included 15,000 to 20,000 people and stretched for four miles. Chief marshal Fitzhugh Lee halted the procession at the monument, and the ceremonies commenced with prayer and the playing of

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<sup>3</sup>DSF, address at the unveiling of the bust of Jefferson Davis in the House of Delegates, Richmond, Va., June 25, 1952 (typed MS), DSFP-LC, Box 242, p. 10.



"Dixie." Colonel Archer Anderson then delivered the dedicatory address, at the conclusion of which General Joseph Eggleston Johnston stepped forward and unveiled the statue. As the crowd of over 100,000 people cheered enthusiastically and cannons roared in salute, a great sham battle erupted between the cavalry and infantry in the nearby fields.<sup>4</sup>

The dedication of the Lee monument was the occasion for Richmond's first reunion of the United Confederate Veterans. This organization, formed in 1899, took control of the Confederate tradition during the next decade and attracted widespread support from veterans of all social classes. Richmond hosted a huge UCV reunion in 1896. A crowd estimated at 100,000 clogged the city's streets and filled all available housing accommodations. In addition to the UCV reunions, there were numerous reunions of individual units, such as that of Mahone's Division in Petersburg in 1903.<sup>5</sup>

These reunions left a lasting impression on Douglas Freeman, whose father took an increasingly active role in veterans' affairs. Douglas later noted that his father's greatest interest during the 43 years of his residence in Richmond "was in the history of the Confederacy and in the

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<sup>4</sup>Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 100-1; Michael B. Chesson, Richmond After the War, 1865-1890 (Richmond, 1981), 205.

<sup>5</sup>Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 133.

care of its survivors." Walker Freeman "read widely, wrote frequently and spoke often on Confederate themes." He joined the R. E. Lee Camp of the United Confederate Veterans, served for many years as its treasurer and was later chosen commander. He also served as vice-president of the board of the Lee Camp Soldiers' Home. In the national UCV organization, he eventually held nearly all offices from that of adjutant of the Virginia division to that of commander-in-chief. When his term as national commander expired, he was named honorary commander-in-chief for life. Douglas' mother also took an active part in the Confederate celebration as a member of both the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Confederate Memorial Literary Society.<sup>4</sup>

If the intimate association of his family with the activities of the Confederate celebration gave the Confederate tradition a special significance for Douglas Freeman, his Richmond schooling served to buttress it. Douglas received his first formal education at a kindergarten run by Miss Sizer Roberts at her residence on Cary Street, near the Freemans' new home at 11 South Third Street. After leaving "Miss Sy's," he was enrolled in McGuire's University School for Boys, which was located on the second floor of a building housing a first-floor grocery store and restaurant. The school's headmaster, John Peyton

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<sup>4</sup>DSF, typed statement, Feb. 9, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 22; Bettie Freeman to DSF, Oct. 1, 1905, DSFC-JHU.

McGuire, was the second of the triumvirate whom Douglas Freeman credited with influencing his development most. "The Boss," as McGuire was known to his students, opened his school in 1866. He had been an instructor in the Confederate Naval Academy, and, according to Douglas Freeman, "Richmond boys always felt that Mr. McGuire had leaped from the deck of the sinking Patrick Henry to his seat behind the desk of his own school. A continuity of Confederate tradition, if not of academic life, there assuredly was at McGuire's." The headmaster's enthusiasm for the Confederacy occasionally worked to the practical advantage of the students. Especially on Friday afternoons, the boys always did their best to get Mr. McGuire to talk about the Confederacy "because they knew that if he began he would become so stirred emotionally that he would not 'keep in' the delinquents of the day." On Lee's birthday and on Memorial Day, "all the blackboards at McGuire's would be covered with chalked appeals for a holiday, but, in full understanding of their master's sentiments, the boys always wrote the word 'holyday.'"<sup>7</sup>

As with Walker Freeman, John Peyton McGuire's reverence for the Confederacy was exceeded only by his strong religious faith. He had considered becoming a minister

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<sup>7</sup>Edmunds, Virginians Out Front, 382; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 9; Diary of DSF, Aug. 22, 1948. DSFP-LC; Richmond News Leader (cited hereafter as NL), June 8, 1942; DSF. "John Stewart Bryan" (typed MS, 1947), Virginia Historical Society, 143.

rather than a teacher, but, as Douglas Freeman later remarked, "If he could have foreseen the influence he was to exert on the character as well as on the minds of boys, he would not have faced alternatives or admitted a dilemma. Teaching was ministry." Douglas remembered his teacher's "inspirational power" and maintained that many Richmonders' "conceptions of truth and honor and responsibility were strengthened for life by Mr. McGuire's 'lectures' Friday afternoon." McGuire emphasized the school's character-building function in the Catalogue: "Conduct enters the estimate of the school's honors because, as a basis for true manhood, self-restraint and devotion to duty are worth more than brilliant talents." Nearly 40 years later, McGuire's son reaffirmed that "the foundation of all education should be character" and claimed that the school had never "yielded to the notions of the 'modern educator.'"<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, McGuire's curriculum was traditional with an emphasis on the classical subjects. Greek, offered at no extra charge, became one of Douglas Freeman's favorite subjects. The school's faculty, all of whom were educated at either the University of Virginia or Virginia Military Institute, also offered courses in Latin.

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<sup>2</sup>NL, June 8, 1942; McGuire's University School for Boys, Catalogue and Announcement, 1900-1901 (Richmond, 1900), 22; J. P. McGuire, Jr., quoted in Hamilton J. Eckenrode (ed.), Richmond, Capital of Virginia (Richmond, 1938), 219-20.

French, German, English composition and literature, mathematics, chemistry and "natural science." History was an important component of the English literature curriculum, and the Catalogue reassured sensitive Southern parents by promising "the intelligent study of such History as we believe to be true."<sup>9</sup>

No records of Douglas Freeman's academic performance at McGuire's are extant, but his progress was rapid. Though the school had no specific graduation requirements, Mr. McGuire thought it unlikely that his students would complete their college preparatory work before the age of 18. Yet Douglas finished his program at McGuire's when he was 15. He demonstrated writing and speaking abilities at an early age, as in his boyhood "sermons." His first published work appeared in an 1894 edition of the Richmond Dispatch:

My dear Santa Claus: I want so many things  
that I cant tell all but I will tell the good  
ones I want a foot ball A gun A bysle A  
lot of roman candles some sky-rockets and some  
sponk to light the pop crackers I am 8 years  
old Good by from

Douglas Freeman  
No 11 south 3rd st<sup>10</sup>

Young Douglas also demonstrated certain personality traits for which he was to become famous as an adult. One was thrift. His brother Allen later recalled that even as a small boy Douglas was careful of his possessions "and was always the last to finish the candy or sweets which were

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<sup>9</sup>Catalogue and Announcement, 1900-1901, 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 3; Richmond Dispatch, Dec. 23, 1894.

given to the two younger boys in equal amounts." Another characteristic that Douglas developed at an early age was his careful planning of daily tasks and budgeting of his time. This is revealed in a note 14-year-old Douglas wrote to himself "preparatory to going to Jamestown with my girl" and saved by his Aunt Florence:

- (1) I shall fix my cuffs.
- (2) I " choose a necktie
- (3) I " fix my shirt
- (4) I shall wash all over.
- (5) I shall take care to wash my hands [that] I may get the marks off.
- (6) I shall choose a hat.
- (7) I " black my shoes.
- (8) get out my suit.
- (9) put ticket and wherewithall in my pocket.
- (10) I go to bed<sup>11</sup>

By the time he left McGuire's School in the spring of 1901, many of the attitudes and interests that were to dominate Douglas Freeman's life were already becoming evident. He shared his father's religious convictions and belief in hard work, thrift and the wise use of time. Though he had not yet chosen a career, he had already demonstrated an affinity for writing and speaking. The wartime reminiscences of Walker Freeman and John Peyton McGuire and the Confederate activities of his Richmond boyhood gave Douglas a keen interest in the history of the Southern Confederacy. His advanced education would serve both to strengthen these interests and to create in Douglas

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<sup>11</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 7-8; DSF, memorandum "written on the 25th day of May 1900," Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

Freeman a sharp interest in current affairs and in the future of his city, state and nation.

### CHAPTER III

#### EDUCATION AND AFFIRMATION

When the precocious Douglas Freeman entered Richmond College in the fall of 1901, the school was still in the first decade of Frederic William Boatwright's remarkable half-century as president. Taking over a Baptist-supported college with 186 students and seven faculty members in 1895, the 27-year-old Boatwright set out at once to raise money for the construction of a science building with laboratory space for chemistry, physics and biology. Despite his enthusiasm for the physical sciences, Boatwright did not neglect the social sciences. Samuel Chiles Mitchell, the newly appointed Professor of Latin, immediately approached the new president with a suggestion for a two hour per week history course. Boatwright agreed to the proposal, and in the fall of 1895, Mitchell offered his first class in history. It proved so successful that it was expanded to three hours a week during the next term and to five hours the following year.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Mitchell, the last of the three men whom Douglas Freeman regarded as the greatest influences on his

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<sup>1</sup>E. Bruce Hellman, The Story of the University of Richmond: A Sesquicentennial Address (New York, 1979), 17; Reuben E. Alley, History of the University of Richmond, 1830-1971 (Charlottesville, 1977), 90-91; Samuel Chiles Mitchell, An Aftermath of Appamattox [sic] [Atlanta, 1954], 52-53.



early life, considered his own life to be "an aftermath of Appomattox":

December 24th, 1864, when I was born in Coffeeville, [Miss.,] was a dark hour in the history of the South for a child to open its eyes. . . . It was not merely a military defeat that followed at Appamattox [sic] on April 9th, when I was not four months old. It was an economic and social revolution. . . . Poverty, hardship and gloom beset my childhood in the deep South. The effects of the Civil War, by wrecking my father's family, have dogged my footsteps even to the present day, seventy-eight years after Appamattox [sic]. Such is the long-drawn aftermath of war.

The generosity of a patron enabled Mitchell to attend Georgetown College in Kentucky, where he was taught by Dr. Arthur Yager, a product of Herbert Baxter Adams' seminar in history and government at the Johns Hopkins University. Mitchell recalled in his autobiography that "the ferment in Southern society following Appomattox forced me to study social change; and, to me, history has appeared as a process toward that end -- a form of statesmanship rather than scholarship. The driving power of this social passion, born of the upheaval in the South, I owe to Dr. Yager." As a teacher at Richmond College, Mitchell's aim was "to produce public-mindedness" in his own students. None was more receptive than Douglas Freeman.<sup>2</sup>

It was Mitchell's optimism, one of many traits he shared with Walker Freeman, that held a particular appeal

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<sup>2</sup>Diary of DSF, Aug. 22, 1948, DSFP-LC; Mitchell, An Aftermath, 1, 22.

for young Douglas. Despite the hardships of his boyhood in Mississippi and Texas and the inevitable disappointments faced by a reformer, Mitchell never lost his faith in a brighter future for the South and in the power of hard work and education to help bring about that future. He saw the "evangel of the dignity of work" as the necessary corrective for the aristocratic South's disdain for toil. And he agreed with the educational reformer Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, another figure closely associated with Richmond College, that the three major tasks facing the South -- economic development, national integration and racial adjustment -- were to be accomplished through the schools. Mitchell also shared with Walker Freeman a reverence for General Lee. He had given his young son Broadus the maxim: "Papa wants his boy to be, Just like General R. E. Lee." Mitchell most admired Lee for his decision "to take the road from Appomattox to Lexington" -- to use the schools "to rebuild the South after the wastage of war."<sup>3</sup>

The most obvious evidence of Mitchell's influence on Douglas Freeman's career is Freeman's use of his mentor's phrase "The Road from Appomattox to Lexington" as a chapter title in his biography of Lee. Yet Mitchell's influence ran much deeper, as Freeman readily acknowledged. "It is to you that I owe my avocation of historical writing," Freeman later wrote to his old professor, "and to you that I owe my

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.. 36-37, 51, 89.

approach to public questions. I have not held always to the same opinion or even to the same approach that have been yours, but from you I always have had a faith in the out-working of man's destiny and a resolution to have a part in that process." When Freeman memorialized him in 1948, he credited Mitchell's faith with making him "the greatest teacher we ever knew."

The idealism of faith. That was Samuel Chiles Mitchell. Faith in the past, a faith so profound that when he had spoken of General Lee he confessed he always went home so overcome by his emotion that he was sick. Faith in the boys about him. Oh, sometimes, to be sure, his judgment in them failed. But had it not been better for him to trust them and believe in them than to doubt them, to discourage? Faith in the future. Always faith in the future. Storms might come. He expected them. This advance of mankind might be thrown back. It was human history to be so. The progress of mankind goes on. That was his faith, the faith of his ideals. That gave him his enthusiasm; that gave him that incomparable inspiration of youth.<sup>4</sup>

Although Freeman came under Mitchell's influence early in his college career, he did not take history until his final year. His first year was devoted to the study of Latin, Greek, mathematics and physics. A diary Douglas kept during his second semester at college reveals something of the attitude toward work that would enable him to complete his undergraduate studies in three years: "Lots of work, but

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<sup>4</sup>DSF, R. E. Lee: A Biography (New York, 1934-1935), IV, 226, n. 2; DSF to Samuel Chiles Mitchell, Dec. 7, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 51; DSF, "Mitchell: The Prophet of His Generation," University of Richmond Alumni Bulletin (Jan., 1949), 3.

oh Master, give us strength to work." Again, in a slightly different vein: "Hard work, but that is all O.K. Haven't got any kick coming at all." Freeman's careful use of time also stood him in good stead. It was probably during his Richmond College days that he devised a system by which he delayed his bedtime by two minutes each night for a month until he had extended his day by a full hour. Such dedication to work and attention to time were no doubt largely responsible for his fine freshman record. His monthly grade averages for the academic year 1901-1902 were 97.5 in Latin, 96.6 in Greek, 98.3 in mathematics and 94 in physics.<sup>5</sup>

Yet college was not all work and no play for young Douglas. He lived at home while attending Richmond College and continued to be an active member of Second Baptist Church. He joined the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity and participated enthusiastically in its various social activities. Although an inguinal hernia suffered at an early age prevented him from taking part in organized athletics, he enjoyed attending various sporting events, especially baseball games. He also experienced the usual ups and downs of young love. "And Madge," he wrote in his diary on April 16, 1902, "do I love her -- yes and no -- you

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<sup>5</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 26; Diary of DSF, April 21 and 22, 1902, DSFP-LC; Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society. Student grade reports are no longer open to the public and thus are taken from Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 112.

understand." When Madge first refused to participate in a musical show that Douglas was directing and then "[d]idn't crack a smile" during the performance, he was sure the answer was no. Yet just two days after the show he wrote: "Never has my darling been so sweet. How it encourages me. She is one of the truest girls in the world. How I love her." Perhaps he summed up the age-old problem best on May 6: "She's as sweet as she can be? Maybe."<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after entering Richmond College, Freeman's interest in oratory and in writing became more pronounced. After hearing a lecture on Savonarola by a renowned turn-of-the-century orator, Edward Howard Griggs, he began taking elocution lessons from a Mrs. Thurston, who lived in an apartment across the street from the Freeman residence on Third Street. His brother Allen recalled Douglas repeating over and over the practice phrases Mrs. Thurston had given him. The phrase that stuck in Allen's mind was: "Three million of people armed in the holy cause of Liberty!" Allen also noticed that Mrs. Thurston "must have devoted much attention to voice placement for Douglas spoke often of its importance and even his ordinary speaking voice became perceptibly lowered in pitch as a result of her teaching." Douglas put his writing skills to work as the college correspondent for the Richmond News, a position that enabled

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<sup>4</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 52; Diary of DSF, April 16 - May 16, 1902.

him to familiarize himself with the workings of the paper and to develop his own style of news writing. He also dabbled in poetry, but, as his brother recalled, finding that he possessed no special skill at the business soon gave it up."<sup>7</sup>

Douglas soon found an outlet for both his writing and speaking talents in the theater. During his first year in school, he starred in the Richmond College Dramatic Club's production of Augustus Thomas' four-act play "Alabama." The heroine was "Carey Preston, an Alabama blossom." Douglas played her father, "Colonel Preston, an old planter." The play was such a success that he convinced the director of the summer school for teachers at the University of Virginia to allow him to produce it again in Charlottesville and to admit all registered teachers at the "somewhat reduced price of ten cents each." In the two frantic weeks prior to the performance, the actors had to rehearse their lines, and costumes and props had to be improvised. Charlottesville's one theater had little scenery available. To make matters worse, the weather was hot, and the cast members were housed in a summer hotel outside of town "where the mosquitoes were ferocious." Despite these problems and the fact that when expenses were paid "there was nothing left but the questionable glory of the performance," Douglas seemed immensely pleased. Allen Freeman, whom Douglas had pressed

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<sup>7</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 20, 26A, 26B.

into service as "Colonel Moberley, a relic of the Confederacy," remembered that "the cast played beyond its powers and Douglas, still in his teens was really convincing as the old man of the play."<sup>8</sup>

Douglas compiled another excellent record during his second year in college. His monthly grade averages were 96.7 in Latin, 94.6 in Greek, 96.6 in English literature and 95.8 in advanced literature. Yet the lure of the theater almost led him to abandon his studies for a career on the stage. An acquaintance was organizing a travelling stock company in the summer of 1903, and Douglas confided to Allen his plans to leave school and join the group. Allen did his best to persuade him to change his mind and continue his education, but only the ultimate failure of the company to materialize prevented him from taking this step.<sup>9</sup>

Though forced to give up his hopes of becoming a professional actor, Douglas had one more memorable moment in theater. While paying a call on one of the students in Richmond Female Institute in the fall of 1903, he was asked by the school's drama instructor if he knew of any play with a large number of female parts and a limited number of male parts. As his classmate John Abram Cutchins later recalled it:

<sup>8</sup>Undated playbill, Richmond College Dramatic Club, DSFP-LC, Box 122; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 21-22.

<sup>9</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 112; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 24.

"Doug" even then was eloquent and imaginative; so he launched forth into a description of a play which promised to be just what the teacher wanted and she, being carried away with it, insisted on knowing where it could be gotten. "Doug" promptly told her the name was "When the Bugle Sounds," but that he could not at the moment recall the name of the publisher. Finally the lady's persistence was such that he had to produce the desired play. He did: He wrote it himself!

He enlisted the aid of Allen in writing the drama, and the two brothers devoted most of their Christmas vacation to the task. With Allen's help, Douglas, using the nom de plume "Donald O'Connell," produced a two-act drama set near Trenton, New Jersey at the time of George Washington's crossing of the Delaware. As promised the cast consisted of 11 females and six males. Douglas himself played the male lead, "Captain Ananias Peterson, a veteran of the Old Navy." John Cutchins played "Mills, an Old Sailor-Servant of Captain Peterson," and Fred S. Toombs played "Lieutenant Robert McHenry, of His Majesty's Hessian Dragoons." The drama was to climax with a fencing scene in which a British soldier, played by a reserve interior lineman on the Richmond College football team named Garrett, dueled with the Old Sailor-Servant while Lieutenant McHenry fought with Captain Peterson. As Cutchins remembered it, the script "called for the servant to be killed outright and the captain to be mortally wounded, but with enough strength left to raise himself on his elbow and give forth a stirring speech which would tie the whole thing up as it should be."



Unfortunately, on the big night, Garrett got nervous and forgot his instructions. He went after Cutchins as if he were an enemy ballcarrier and became so reckless with his sword that the Old Sallor-Servant was driven back and fell across Captain Peterson as the Captain lay desperately wounded. Freeman, intending to whisper stage instructions, boomed out: "Get off me, you fool!" The Old Sallor-Servant, quaking with laughter, replied: "I can't you damn fool, I'm dead!" As the audience shrieked with laughter, the curtain was lowered and the actors put in their proper positions. The curtain rose again, but the sight of a laughing corpse was too much for the audience and, as Cutchins put it, "the play ended in great hilarity."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman's interest in dramatic fiction also found expression in the Richmond College Messenger, the school's literary magazine, which he edited during his final year. He contributed a series of "Stories of the Opera," in which he demonstrated his narrative skill and his sense of the dramatic. The stories are set in New York City at an opera school run by a Madame Beaumont. In the first of these stories, "Rudolph," the narrator, Henry Millar, describes the main character:

It must have been in January that Rudolph first came to the school -- a tall, graceful Italian, with a rich voice and an olive

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<sup>10</sup>John A. Cutchins, Memories of Old Richmond (1881-1944) [Verona, Va., 1973], 101-3; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 23; Undated playbill, DSFP-LC, Box 238.

complexion, as courteous as a knight, but as simple as a boy. . . . He fully came up to my ideas of the Old World student, saturated with the lore of the Renaissance, even at a sacrifice of the facts of modern European affairs; conversant with the great men of the past, though ignorant of Tolstol's life and works.

Rudolph had never known his parents. Urged by his attorney to study in America, he came to Madame Beaumont's school, where he met the narrator. When asked to sing as a replacement, he finds himself paired with his long-lost love, Beccia. Says the narrator: "Then he told me how it had happened, how Beccia had enlisted with the great prima donna, how she had searched in vain for him in America, and how the face before him at first he mistook for a dream." Then, in a final dramatic twist, it is revealed that Madame Beaumont is Rudolph's mother.<sup>11</sup>

In the more ambitious "Francesca," the heroine, "Francesca Smizzini," actually Frances Smith of Georgia, leaves her home and her lover, guardian and distant cousin, Tom Prescott, to study with Madame Beaumont. The story centers around the conflict between the old world, represented by the rural South, and the modern world, represented by New York. Shortly before Francesca's big debut in Richard Wagner's Tannhauser, a dissipated Tom shows up with a fever. Francesca nurses him back to health and reforms him through her show of love, but Tom forces her to

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<sup>11</sup>DSF, "Rudolph," Richmond College Messenger (Nov.-Dec., 1903), 75-86.

choose between the traditional world of marriage and the "other world" of a career in the New York opera. The conflict remains unresolved as the story ends with Francesca backstage, called in one direction by the pleading of her lover and in the other by the strains of the "Pilgrim's Chorus." The significance of Freeman's youthful fascination with the stage and the writing of fiction lies in the flair for the dramatic that he displayed in both pursuits. Although he was never to pursue either career professionally, he was to employ his keen sense of drama in his writing of history and in his public speaking.<sup>12</sup>

Freeman's decision to write the dramatic story of the Army of Northern Virginia came during the fall of his final year at Richmond College. The roots of this decision ran deep, but he was undoubtedly influenced by Professor Mitchell, whose history course he took that year. Mitchell stated his philosophy of history in the college catalogue:

History is taught with the desire of presenting an insight into the past, so that the mind may be disciplined for the judgment of the present. History is regarded as one stream, with Rome as the great reservoir, into which the best of Greece and the Orient was emptied, and from which, by many outlets, Europe has been supplied. Facts are studied to discover principles and to explain social phenomena, and the method of instruction is from the standpoint of politics and economics, for history is properly the account of the evolution of social organization.

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<sup>12</sup>DSF, "Francesca," Richmond College Messenger (Jan., 1904), 136-43 and (Feb.-March, 1904), 184-92.

The year's course that Douglas took was a survey of English and American history that emphasized the close connection between English and American institutions. The course offered a "rapid glance" at the political history of England but devoted more time to "tracing the growth of the English Constitution in its successive stages, from the Magna Charta to the Reform Bills of this century." Mitchell summarized briefly the colonial period of American history and devoted the remainder of the course to United States history. "Much attention" was given to the historical geography of America. Douglas earned a 94.6 monthly grade average in Mitchell's course.<sup>13</sup>

Freeman's other courses during his final year in college included philosophy, biology and Greek. His philosophy professor was Dr. William Heth Whitsitt, who had joined the Richmond College faculty in 1901 after resigning the presidency of Southern Baptist Seminary because of a long controversy centering on his rejection of the tradition that every Baptist church was directly descended from the original congregation in Jerusalem. Whitsitt presented the history of philosophy "from its origin among the Ionians down to our own age" and examined the "rise of various theories and tendencies, and their connection one with another." He stressed "the influence of philosophical ideas

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<sup>13</sup>Richmond College Bulletin, Catalogue Number (July, 1904), 51-52; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 112.

upon the progress of history" and, like Dr. Mitchell, he emphasized the relationship between his subject and modern life. Freeman's monthly grade average in Whitsitt's course was 90.6. Douglas showed a strong interest in biology and earned a 95 monthly average in that course. He earned a grade average of 94 in Greek, a subject for which he maintained a lifelong enthusiasm and in which he received a Bachelor of Arts degree at the Richmond College commencement of June 5, 1904.<sup>14</sup>

The Richmond faculty were highly impressed with the excellence of Freeman's work. Dr. A. C. Wightman, his biology teacher, regarded one of Douglas' papers as "the best he had ever received from any student anywhere since he had been teaching Biology." President Boatwright relayed this opinion to Walker Freeman and added his own comment: "Douglas overflows with energy and seems destined for a large work. I pray that the Lord may bless and direct him to wide usefulness." Although the exact course into which Douglas would channel his energy was not yet set, it was becoming apparent by 1904 that his largest work and widest usefulness lay in the field of history. Accordingly, in the fall of that year, he enrolled in the doctoral program in history at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.; Alley, History of the University of Richmond, 106-7; Richmond College Bulletin, Catalogue Number (July, 1904), 23-24, 50.

<sup>15</sup>F. W. Boatwright to Walker B. Freeman, Feb. 20, 1904, Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

If Richmond College was the logical undergraduate school for Douglas because of its Baptist affiliation, its proximity to the Freeman home and its expansion under President Boatwright, Johns Hopkins was an equally logical choice for graduate study. In the quarter century after its founding in 1876, the Hopkins had moved to the forefront of American historical scholarship under the leadership of Dr. Herbert Baxter Adams. Professor Adams, who pioneered in introducing the German seminar method of instruction in the United States, attracted more Northerners and Westerners than Southerners to his department of history, political science and economics, but Southerners, as Wendell Holmes Stephenson has noted, were so important a segment that they convinced themselves that the Hopkins was a Southern university in a Southern city. Adams welcomed Southern students and encouraged them to pursue the "scientific" study of Southern institutions. Although the center of Southern historical scholarship shifted to Columbia University after Adams' untimely death in 1901, his legacy continued to attract promising Southern students. The special Hopkins fellowships for students of "character and intellectual promise" from Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina provided an additional incentive for Douglas to attend the Baltimore school, and he was the recipient of a Virginia fellowship for three years. A final and important reason reason why Douglas attended the Hopkins was that his

beloved brother Allen was a medical student there.<sup>16</sup>

Douglas shared with Allen and another medical student a suite of three bedrooms and a sitting room on the fourth floor of a building known as "Hotel Hopkins," located at 318 North Broadway in East Baltimore. While his brother took his meals for \$6 per week at Mrs. Rutledge's boarding house on Jackson Place, the frugal Douglas saved a dollar a week by eating in a "somewhat informal restaurant" on the first floor of the "Hotel Hopkins." On Saturday evenings the Freeman boys spent fifty cents each for seats in the peanut gallery of a theater or concert hall. They enjoyed Richard Mansfield as Cyrano de Bergerac, Joseph Jefferson as Rip Van Winkle and William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes. A particularly memorable experience was hearing Richard Wagner's opera Parsifal sung in English. The brothers also devoted weekend hours to long walks and discussions of topics of mutual interest. Allen later wrote that it was during this year together in Baltimore that he and Douglas "began to develop that intellectual congeniality which never afterward failed them."<sup>17</sup>

Except for the weekend diversions with his brother and

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<sup>16</sup>Wendell Holmes Stephenson, Southern History in the Making: Pioneer Historians of the South (Baton Rouge, 1964), 8, 54, 69-70; T. R. Ball to DSF, Oct. 14, 1904 and Ira Remsen to DSF, June 13, 1906, both in Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society; Remsen to DSF, June 10, 1905, DSFP-LC, Box 121; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 27.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 28-30; DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Jan. 11, 1905, DSFC-JHU.

the completion of a historical novel, "My Lady's Lord," which was rejected by four publishers, Douglas devoted his time during his first year at Johns Hopkins to a heavy schedule of course work in history and political science. He took year-long lecture courses in "Early Germanic History" and "Paleography and Diplomatics" with Dr. Friedrich Keutgen, "American Diplomatic History to 1801" and "History of Secession in the United States" with Dr. James Curtis Ballagh and "Legal Aspects of Economic and Industrial Problems" and "Political Theories and Literature of the 18th and 19th Centuries" with Dr. W. W. Willoughby. He attended Dr. John Martin Vincent's one-semester lecture courses on "History of the Reformation" and "History of the Puritan Revolution" as well as Dr. Vincent's seminars in "Municipal History" and "The 16th Century." He also took two seminars in political science with Professor Willoughby. Perhaps the most valuable course of his graduate career was Visiting Professor Keutgen's first-year seminar "Problems in Historical Research." In a letter to his father, Douglas quoted with approval the German scholar's statement that "we don't care if History never does any body any good, -- we are after the science." Such a sentiment was uncharacteristic of Freeman's philosophy and probably represented the young student's temporary infatuation with the views of a distinguished man of learning. Yet Douglas accepted "Father" Keutgen's definition of history as



a science and never renounced the ideal of thoroughness in historical research and writing. As he wrote to Walker Freeman: "A man ought not to go over a field and leave something else for the next man who comes along to do, -- when a thing is done, at least when you have done it, let it be indeed done, so that not a new word can be said."<sup>10</sup>

Douglas worked so diligently, even during his vacation periods, that even his father sometimes expressed concern. "Douglas is working hard and keeps up all right," Walker Freeman wrote during the Christmas holidays. "He works all day every day and well into the night. That is all very well, but it would be possible, should he continue the lick at which he is now going, to get out of touch with the world, and become a book worm, which I hope will never be the case." Douglas made frequent references in his letters to his parents of his love of work. "But who minds work, -- not I for one," he wrote to his father. "I had rather work anyday than play; I never was much good at playing; work suits my constitution and mode of living a great deal better." Similarly, he wrote to his mother in May of 1905: "It is a big summer's work that I have planned, but I think that I will find in it the very greatest possible delight."

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<sup>10</sup>The Bobbs-Merrill Company to DSF, Oct. 17, 1904, Harper & Brothers to DSF, Oct. 18, 1904, G. P. Putnam's Sons to DSF, Nov. 15, 1904, L. C. Page & Company to DSF, Jan. 17, 1905, all in DSFP-LC, Box 4; Johns Hopkins University Circular, vol. 23, no.7, pp. 19-20 and vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 18-21; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 45; DSF to Walker B. Freeman, March 18 and March 20, 1905, DSFC-JHU.

There is nothing half[er] so good in all this world, I think, as to have a good day's work and to do it, and the delight of conscien[ce] that comes from such a day's labor is always pleasant."<sup>19</sup>

Yet Walker Freeman need not have worried that his son would become an ascetic, for Douglas was still too full of youthful vigor to love books alone. As Douglas wrote to Bettie Freeman on another occasion: "I will tell you that there is nothing that I have found in this world that is as good as real hard work, rightly proportioned, so as not to make us book-wor[sh]ips, or fossils; but mixed with it enough of more liberalising influences, to keep the balance exact and right." Although he indeed worked so hard during the early summer of 1905 that he had to retire to the Virginia mountains for a rest, he also found a "liberalising" influence in a girl named Margaret. Though existing references to this teenage love affair are scarce, the two apparently struck up a romance that culminated in an engagement. When, in October of 1905, the young lady travelled to Easton, Pennsylvania, she spent a week with Douglas, who was now living alone in a boarding house run by a Baltimore physician. At Thanksgiving he journeyed to see "Mag" in Easton, but there the relationship ended. "Events the last few hours have fallen thick and fast, and I don't

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<sup>19</sup>Walker B. Freeman to Allen W. Freeman, Jan. 5, 1905, DSF to Walker B. Freeman, May 9, 1905, DSF to Bettie Freeman, May 17, 1905, DSFC-JHU.

exactly know when to begin in their narration," Douglas wrote to Walker from Easton. "Suffice it simply to be said, however, that the engagement has been broken off. . . . There was no fellow other than myself concerned in the deed; and I bear my share in the breakup. I am not sorry, in fact now that it has come I am very glad, because I don't think the girl was the one for me after all."<sup>20</sup>

Though Douglas consoled himself with the knowledge that he would now be under no obligation to buy a Christmas present for his recently beloved, the episode must have affected him deeply, for during the next several months his letters contained an increased number of references to religion and meditations on spiritual matters. In March of 1906 he even decided to fulfill his mother's wishes by becoming a minister. He explained his decision to his father:

As you know, it has now been five years since I know not what came upon me, and I first thought about studying for the ministry, and devoting myself to that service. Events over which I had not full control intervened, and that idea vanished from the prospect of my life. But never, during all these years, did it all disappear, and there have been but few days, when, in some form or other, it did not come to me. During the present session, and especially since my trip to Easton, these thoughts have been of greater frequency, until it has seemed to me that I would not have rest from them. . . . I am going to take up that work, and devote my life

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<sup>20</sup>DSF to Bettie Freeman, Jan. 16, Oct. 21, 1905, DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Aug. 3, Nov. [?], 1905, all in DSFC-JHU; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 28.

to it, -- the Christian ministry.

He resolved to complete his doctorate but then to accept any available pulpit "and to do the best I can, by God's help, to uplift the social, moral, and intellectual sphere where I am cast." Yet the spirit of skepticism at Johns Hopkins served to dampen his religious zeal, and by his own admission, he underwent a crisis of faith during his last years in Baltimore. He later described his experience during these years to his Men's Bible Class:

My parents wanted me to be a minister. . . . I went to a university, the name of which I still reverence, but the traditions of which, while not irreligious, were distinctly unreligious. Into that cold water I plunged after having been in a denominational college of wholesome life. There I began to study history; I gained a familiarity with history, and pretty soon lost what little faith I had. . . . That was about the year 1907.<sup>21</sup>

If young Freeman's faith in God temporarily waned while he was at Hopkins, other elements of his fathers' faith never flagged. Douglas never doubted the gospel of work. Finding solace as well as satisfaction in a good day of hard work, he plunged ahead with another full load of courses in the spring semester of 1906. In addition to seminars with Professors Vincent and Ballagh, he took Vincent's lecture courses "Historical Writers since the Reformation" and "England in the Later Middle Ages" and Ballagh's lecture

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<sup>21</sup>DSF to Bettie Freeman, Dec. 12, 1905 and DSF to Walker B. Freeman, March 12, 1906, both in DSFC-JHU; DSF, "The Form and the Substance" (typed transcript, Feb. 8, 1925), DSFP-LC, Box 126.

courses "Formation and Sources of the Federal Constitution" and "The U. S. Public Land System." He attended two more courses in political science, taught by Dr. Willoughby, and five courses in his second subordinate field, political economy. Although he was more diligent than the average student, he did not hesitate to make caustic comments about the failings of his instructors. Douglas was personally fond of Dr. Vincent, but he found the venerable historian's lectures to be almost unbearable. He parodied one of them in a letter to an absent classmate:

In 1348-9 in England. There was a plague.  
The plague was bad. People died of the  
plague. Many people died of the bad plague.  
The many people who died of the bad plague in  
1348-9, were very much disfigured by black  
spots, hence the very bad plague which occurred  
in the reign of Edward the Third. In the year  
1348-9 was called the Black Death.

More than four decades later Freeman still remembered how awful Vincent's lectures had been. "I remember one occasion when Vincent was lecturing more laboriously than ever about the German Reformation," he wrote in 1948. "I counted, and he used the word 'thing' to refer to at least a half dozen different subjects in the course of two or three minutes' utterance."<sup>22</sup>

Douglas also began work on his dissertation during the spring term of 1906. The seed of his doctoral thesis had

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<sup>22</sup>Johns Hopkins University Circular, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 40-42; DSF to Sam Derieux, Feb. 28, 1906, DSFC-JHU; DSF to George Radcliffe, May 7, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 92.

been planted in Professor Ballagh's course on secession the previous year, when he had written a paper on the Virginia secession convention. In January, 1906, he secured the approval of Dr. Vincent, the department chairman, to expand the paper into a dissertation and soon set to work on the task with characteristic energy. The topic was a logical one, for living in Baltimore had not loosened his ties to Virginia and the South. His father expressed enthusiasm for the subject, though with a mild caveat: "I am much interested in what shall be your thesis, and it does seem to me the 'Secession in Virginia' would be a good one, only if you are sure that as warm a southerner as you are (though I know you are a temperate, sane and broadminded reasonable man), can write in an absolutely national or catholic spirit on the subject. I firmly believe you can." Douglas enlisted Walker's aid in contacting survivors of the convention, and father and son frequently exchanged views on secession and the war that resulted.<sup>23</sup>

During his first year at Hopkins, Douglas had announced his grand intentions "to write that story of our country, that story of the causes that led up to those four dark years of war, which changed the whole tenor of our nation, and made it a nation, where before we were only a confederation." Twenty years, he added prophetically, "is

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<sup>23</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman: Jan. 18, 1906 and Walker B. Freeman to DSF, Nov. 21, 1904, both in DSFC-JHU.

but a trifle for so great a work." A letter he wrote to his father two years later deserves to be quoted at some length, for as one historian has said, it "presents what is possibly the most explicit statement of his beliefs and feelings about the war that Douglas Freeman ever committed to writing."

Some of these days, God willing, we shall see what was the true significance of that long conflict of opposing interests; someone shall perhaps arise who will be able, as no one thus far has had power, to write the war as it was: To tell the story of two different peoples, with a common blood, but entirely contrasting traditions and spirits; two peoples who engaged in the use of slave labor. How one found it unprofitable, and how it paid for awhile in the other, but was recognised as a curse in itself and baleful in its interests, -- all this has to be told. Then, one must tell how, in the North a small group of people arose who believed that slavery was wrong in itself, -- a mortal mortal wrong, and began, hesitatingly at first, to preach their theory. Then it must be told how the invention of the cotton gin made slavery profitable, and how, when the abolition sentiment began to spread, the South began to defend an institution which it had previously abhorred. It is a long story then, and chiefly a story of economic struggle, how slavery was circumscribed, how slaves became too numerous in the more northern states of the government, and more profitable in the southern; how Texas came as an opening to the slaveholder, in legitimate constitutional, and economically necessary expansion; and how at the time, this was fought by the North on the economic basis, -- all this will have to be told, and however one may be ashamed when he comes to consider the days before the war, -- and they were sir, discreditable to both sides, -- one can look with pride on the struggle of arms. It was a mighty sight, for a whole southern nation rose in arms, against a northern brother equally as valorous in arms. From that civilization of the South,

declared by northern politicians to be rotten through, -- there came men of principles unimpeachable, of valour indescribable, of powers vast and devoted. These men led the southern men, through struggle and through death, through victory and through defeat. Nor is the historian to reckon that they were only the sons of great landed slaveholders who fought in the southern ranks: From the mountain fastnesses where slaves were unknown, from the valleys where negroes were abhorred, from cabin homes where fathers and sons toiled and reaped their little crop by the sweat of their brow, -- from these came the great rank and file of the southern army.

If Freeman's emphasis on economic factors in his interpretation of the war's causes reflected his study of history and political economy, his view of the war itself as a heroic struggle, particularly on the part of the Confederate army, reflected part of the faith with which he had been raised. It was this heroic struggle of Southern arms that young Freeman had first vowed to chronicle on that autumn day in 1903, and it would remain his primary interest for decades to come.<sup>24</sup>

The first small step in Freeman's quest "to preserve from immolating time some of [the Confederacy's] heroic figures" came in the summer of 1906. While researching his dissertation at the Virginia State Library in Richmond, the scholarly young man had attracted the admiring attention of the library's director, Dr. H. R. McIlwaine, and Mrs. Kate Pleasants Minor, the reference librarian. When Mrs. Minor

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<sup>24</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Jan. 30, 1905, May 23, 1907, DSFC-JHU; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 140.



left for a two-week vacation, McIlwaine asked Douglas to substitute for her. He gladly accepted the chance to "pick up a little extra change." While filling in for Mrs. Minor, he also agreed to annotate the introduction to a book Dr. McIlwaine had just finished writing. According to his later account of the story, Douglas performed his duties, pocketed his \$40 in pay and returned at the end of the summer to another heavy load of courses at Johns Hopkins. Yet in February of 1907, Mrs. Minor, a leading figure in the Confederate Memorial Literary Society, wrote to ask if he would undertake to compile a catalog of the papers in the Society's Museum of the Confederacy. Douglas readily accepted Mrs. Minor's invitation: "The work is one that appeals to me strongly, as a contribution to historical science, as a legitimate field of historical enterprise, and above all as an offering to the cause." In later years he liked to cite the story of how he came to write A Calendar of Confederate Papers as prime evidence of the efficacy of a favorite maxim: "Do not wait for the big opportunity -- make the small opportunity big." Evidence suggests that he played a larger role in creating this opportunity than he later cared to admit. On the day that he received Mrs. Minor's proposal, he wrote his father that "I consider the work proposed here of sufficient importance to warrant the offer I made there, and believe that properly done it will be a good thing for the Museum,

and a much better [one] for your son." Regardless of how much of the opportunity to compile the Calendar was the result of chance and how much the result of calculation, the fact remains that this small opportunity led ultimately to the opportunity to write the story of Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>25</sup>

Although A Calendar of Confederate Papers was not published until 1908, Douglas completed most of the work on the project during the summer and fall of 1907. Thus, the Calendar may be considered to be his contribution to what he described as "preeminently Virginia[']s year." In addition to the tercentenary of the founding of the Jamestown colony, 1907 witnessed the centennial of the birth of Robert E. Lee and the Richmond reunion of the United Confederate Veterans. Freeman's work in Baltimore prevented him from attending many of the festivities in person, but he was never far removed from Richmond in spirit. He corresponded frequently with his parents during the Confederate celebration of 1907, and his letters reveal both his concern for historical accuracy in the commemoration and his reverence for Southern heroes. "I am especially interested in all that concerns our coming reunion," he wrote his father. "I am hoping that it will be of great value, not only per se, but by awakening

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<sup>25</sup>DSF to Harry E. Henschkel, Aug. 27, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 50; Cheek, "Reflections," 27-28; Kate P. Minor to DSF, Feb. 19, 1907, DSF to Kate P. Minor, Feb. 21, 1907, DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Feb. 21, 1907, all in DSFC-JHU; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 182.

In our people a new thirst after history and historical fact. . . . I certainly am sorry that I shall not be there to see you in line, for if there is one thing that does [make] my heart burn within me, in patriotic fire, it is the sight of the men of 61-65 still active, alert and prosperous." Another feature of Richmond's celebration of the Confederacy in 1907 was the dedication of a monument to Jefferson Davis. The statue was hauled from the train station to its place on Monument Avenue by a group of 3,000 school children. In commenting on the occasion, Douglas reiterated both his belief in the glory of the South's struggle and his intention to chronicle it:

God bless the children; let them do everything they can to keep alive the memory of that immortal struggle; no period of history offers more thrilling examples of all that is noble and good. For my part, I hope some day to put it to paper, and add my bit to the general sum of knowledge.

He never questioned the heroic qualities of the men who fought for the Southern cause and thus never feared that in telling their story he might be torn between veneration and his quest for historical fact.<sup>26</sup>

One Confederate hero above all others seemed to him to represent the nobility of the South's cause. That hero was Robert Edward Lee, his father's beloved commander. Though unable to be in Richmond on January 19, 1907, the centennial

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<sup>26</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, May 23, 1907, May 14, 1907, April 15, 1907, all in DSFC-JHU.

of Lee's birth, Douglas held an "informal celebration of the day." For him, Lee was not merely a name from the recent past. As he expressed his thoughts to Walker: "How my heart rejoices to see the general nature of the celebration, -- embracing all the South, and characterized by such general reverence for a great presence. Yes, a presence as well as a name; for Lee still lives, -- thank God, through all the South." While Douglas believed that Lee "stands for all that was best and highest" in the Old South and felt Lee's presence at work in the New South, he exulted in the fact that the centenary brought signs of an increasing respect for Lee in all parts of the United States. He wrote with satisfaction from Baltimore on Lee's birthday: "The papers here for a week have been full of his fame, and this evening's News was virtually full of it." As his father's son, Douglas cherished national reconciliation. He thus attached a special significance to the centennial address of Charles Francis Adams at Washington and Lee University in Lexington. "It is a striking fact," he wrote, "that the address in Lexington, where Lee's fame best lives, should be delivered by a man in whose veins ran the blood of two Northern presidents, and who himself fought against Lee. But he has come to see his glory and his greatness."<sup>27</sup>

In his veneration for General Lee both as a model of

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<sup>27</sup>Diary of DSF, Jan. 19, 1907, DSFP-LC; DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Jan. 20, 1907 and DSF to Bettie Freeman, Jan. 19, 1907, both in DSFC-JHU.

behavior for the New South and a hero for all America, as in his belief in the gospel of work, Douglas reflected the faith instilled in him by John Peyton McGuire, by Samuel Chiles Mitchell and, most especially, by Walker Freeman. Until the arrival of Charles McLean Andrews during Douglas' final year at Johns Hopkins, he never found in Baltimore a mentor to rival the Richmond triumvirate, and it is doubtful that Andrews' influence would have been as great even had he come to Hopkins earlier. Freeman's four years in Baltimore, with its libraries, theaters and concert halls, widened his cultural horizons, and his graduate work sharpened his research skills and increased his interest in politics and economics. Yet the Hopkins years served largely to affirm the values and interests of his youth. Even his religious faith, though seriously challenged, was far from shattered.<sup>28</sup>

In March, 1905, during his first year in graduate school, Douglas Freeman explained his life's ambitions to his father:

I aim at man[y] things in this world, you know. I want to be a good scholar, one whose name will not be forgotten tomorrow; I want to be a keen thinker, the impress of whose mind will mould the thought of days that come after; I want to be a strong speaker, to carry conviction to the hearts of men in matters that concern their welfare most. But above all there is one thing I want to be, -- a man; and when I look back at all I ever knew

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<sup>28</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 46; Cheek, "Reflections," 27.

for the model of manhood, I dont have to take down the classics of other days, and in the forgotten languages read of the great and good who established a rule of living; I dont have to look at that great historian or that great logician for an example, they were great in their place; but I want a MAN, "every inch a man", and that I find in my father.

By faithfully applying the family work ethic to his studies, Douglas erected a firm foundation upon which to build his career as scholar, thinker and speaker. The excellence of his efforts brought him numerous honors, including fellowships and election to Phi Beta Kappa. Yet he did not receive his most coveted honor until June 3, 1908, when he passed the oral examination in American history, the final requirement for his doctorate. "PASSED THE BOARD," he telegraphed home to his father, "WILL BE HOME TOMORROW." Back came the reply: "WELL DONE, HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS COME HOME TOMORROW." The loyal son pasted his father's telegram in his scrapbook and wrote beneath it: "The reward of it all!"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, March 24, 1905, DSFC-JHU; T. R. Ball to DSF, Jan. 17, 1908, Edward C. Armstrong to DSF, April 25, 1907, DSF to Walker B. Freeman, June 3, 1908, Walker B. Freeman to DSF, June 3, 1908, all in Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

CHAPTER IV  
"A BRILLIANT YOUNG VIRGINIAN"

On June 4, 1908, Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman stepped from the train onto his beloved Richmond soil. He had enjoyed many pleasures in Baltimore, but he had never lost his affection for the city on the James. "[I]f I were choosing a permanent home," he had written from Baltimore, "it would not be in this place, -- give me the state of Virginia, and the city of Richmond in particular." Walker Freeman, for his part, never doubted that his son would achieve greatness in the capital city of the Old Dominion. "I am happy in the thought that this dear old city will some day be the center from which you will do a great work for humanity," he had written Douglas in 1907.<sup>1</sup>

Sure as was Douglas of his yearning for Richmond and his desire to accomplish great things there, his immediate plans were clouded by uncertainty. He had never been excited by the prospect of being an underpaid and underappreciated college professor. "If I must be poor all my life," he wrote, "at least let me be free, and do my own work, for the country, and for the science not for a little circle of unappreciative students. Research for me, no teaching, if you please." Only one college teaching

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<sup>1</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, May 15, 1905 and Walker B. Freeman to DSF, April 25, 1907, both in DSFC-JHU.

position aroused his interest. That was at his alma mater, Richmond College. He was excited by the chance to live in Richmond and by the opportunity to play a role in the continuing growth of the school, which was now moving toward the status of a university. Professor Mitchell had contacted him as early as February of 1907 about the possibility of joining the history faculty, and by the time Douglas left Johns Hopkins, a job at Richmond College seemed assured. His former Greek instructor, W. A. Harris, wrote to him: "Since Mitchell wants you, I do not see how there could be much doubt about your chances." Yet when the college's Instruction Committee met on July 11, 1908, they rejected all of the applicants, including Douglas. President Boatwright notified him of the committee's decision the following day. Anxious to secure satisfactory employment, Douglas contacted Mercer University in Georgia about an opening, but the school's president informed him that the position had already been filled by a recent graduate of Harvard.<sup>2</sup>

Adding gloom to young Dr. Freeman's disappointment was the shocking news that his mother was suffering from breast cancer. Bettie Freeman had concealed this malady from her family until Douglas had completed his doctorate and

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<sup>2</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, May 15, 1905 and Samuel Chiles Mitchell to DSF, Feb, 17, 1907, both in DSFC-JHU; W. A. Harris to DSF, May 26, 1908 and F. W. Boatwright to DSF, July 11, 1908, both in DSFP-LC, Box 4; S. Jameson to DSF, Sept. 3, 1908, DSFP-LC, Box 121.



resettled in Richmond. Though she submitted to surgery immediately after making her condition known, the disease had already reached the incurable stage. Her gallant fight against the ravaging illness served to inspire her family and friends, but she finally succumbed on May 29, 1909.<sup>a</sup>

As Douglas came to the realization that he faced an uncertain future without the gentle guidance of the person he professed to love best, he underwent a personal crisis that he was able to conquer only through the faith of his fathers. This involved both a rebirth of the spiritual faith he had begun to question during his last years at Hopkins and a rigorous application of the gospel of work and perseverance, which he had never doubted. Though he had become skeptical of many of his long-held religious beliefs, Douglas continued to attend services with his family at Second Baptist Church after his return to Richmond. On a Sunday morning just days after he learned of his failure to obtain the Richmond College position, he was approached on the church portico by Mr. James Hinton Goddin, a successful sand contractor who had devoted some of his wealth to the founding of a mission in the old Theatre Comique in the city's red light district. Mr. Goddin, probably aware that Douglas had done some mission work during his first years in

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<sup>a</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 40; Religious Herald, June 10, 1909; Resolutions adopted by the Ladies' Guild of Second Baptist Church, Richmond, Va., June 8, 1909. Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

Baltimore, asked him to come speak to the people to whom the mission was ministering. Douglas protested that he had nothing to say. "Why," he exclaimed, "I need more to be ministered unto than to minister. I need what the mission has to offer; I have nothing I can give to it." Goddin insisted: "Well, come. Anyway, come." Douglas went and went again. Night after night he heard thieves, drunkards, pimps, "the very dregs of the earth . . . who had plumbed all the depths of human woe and sounded the deepest seas of mortal misery" stand up and give testimony of how they had been born again in Christ. These men had not been saved so much by initial belief as by living. Through living had come their belief. Douglas considered this to be proof of the power of Jesus Christ, proof "as clear and convincing as any proof of a scientific fact could be made through an experiment." The young "scientifically" trained historian reasoned that if Christianity could work for these men, it might work for him. "I decided to try it," he recalled. "I began as humbly as I could to lead the Christ-life. I went to work for the Kingdom. Soon, doubts began to disappear, or at least to lose their importance." Gradually, as he saw how the power of Christ changed men's lives, he came to have in his heart "an indefinable conviction that it must be so, this belief that Jesus was God." The lesson that he learned and put into practice was: "Take the word of Jesus. Live those words, and then you will know whether He is

the Christ, the Son of God."<sup>4</sup>

Freeman's views on specific aspects of Christian theology were to change over the years. He felt that such change was good because, as he put it, "I hope to have a larger conception of a God of Law than I have today." Yet the essentials of his religious beliefs would remain constant after his reaffirmation of faith in that summer of 1908. His eldest daughter has noted that her father's "religion was so profound and so wholly the source of his life that it is hard to express." And as a leading student of his thought has written, Freeman's "religious faith did inform his writing in the years ahead -- sometimes quite pointedly in his editorials, less obviously but nonetheless implicitly in his biographies."<sup>5</sup>

Besides spiritual renewal, Freeman's trips to Mr. Goddin's mission produced another lasting result. On his first visit, Mr. Goddin's tall, blonde, blue-eyed daughter, Inez, was playing the piano for the service. Despite Miss Goddin's stately beauty, it was not love at first sight for Douglas. "I didn't think too much about you when I first saw you," he wrote to her a few months later, "but now I

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<sup>4</sup>DSF to Bettie Freeman, July 3, 1902, DSFC-JHU; Cheek, "Reflections," 28-29; DSF, "The Form and the Substance" (typed transcript, Feb. 8, 1925) and "Growth" (typed transcript, May 3, 1925), both in DSFP-LC, Box 126; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, May 26, 1924, DSFP-LC, Box 177; DSF to Mrs. R. L. Chenery, April 5, 1921, Box 5.

<sup>5</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 38; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 175-76.

think of little else." As they continued to see each other, Douglas came to find in her the purity and beauty he had always wanted and decided that the serene, somewhat shy Inez Virginia Goddin would make the perfect wife for a literary man. Yet in spite of the young couple's growing love for each other, their marriage would have to wait until Douglas could accumulate enough money to support a wife.<sup>6</sup>

Douglas continued to live with his family after his return to Richmond. With their other boys gone, Walker and Bettie took an apartment in the Raleigh, at the corner of Harrison and Franklin streets. As Mrs. Freeman's condition worsened, Douglas took over management of the household and did much of the nursing of his terminally ill mother. After her death, he continued to keep house for himself and his semi-retired father.<sup>7</sup>

When a college teaching position failed to materialize, Douglas took on a variety of jobs in the Richmond area. In the fall of 1908, he began teaching history and drama at a school for girls run by Miss Virginia Ellett. He would bicycle from the Raleigh to the school and usually arrive around noon, slightly ahead of schedule. Often he would remain after 4 p.m. for fireside conferences with the headmistress. "Miss Jennie" shared not only Freeman's interest in educating youth but also his reverence for

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<sup>6</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 28-29.

<sup>7</sup>Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 39-41, 44.

General Lee. According to one alumna of the school, the girls always knew when they had been exceedingly bad, because Miss Jennie "would turn General Lee's photograph to the wall, to spare him the painful sight." Also in 1908 Dr. Ennion Williams, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Health (of which Allen Freeman was now Assistant Commissioner), hired Douglas at a salary of \$500 per year to handle publicity for the Department. By 1911 he assumed the title of director of publicity and began speaking on behalf of the Department throughout the commonwealth. In 1910 he took on a related job as executive director of the Virginia Anti-Tuberculosis Association. This position also required frequent public speaking and increased his recognition across the state.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the greatest opportunities continued to stem from his two-week stint at the Virginia State Library in 1906. In March, 1909, Douglas was back at work in the library when Dr. McIlwaine approached him about an inquiry to the librarian from John Stewart Bryan, publisher of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Mr. Bryan had asked McIlwaine for the name of someone qualified to write a series of articles on needed tax reform in Virginia. The old librarian had thought of Douglas, who had journalistic experience as a college

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<sup>29</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 27; Edmunds, Virginians Out Front, 386-87; J. Bryan, III, The Sword Over the Mantel: The Civil War and I (New York, 1960), 43; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 43; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 206.

correspondent and a knowledge of politics and economics from his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins. Bryan hired him at a salary of seven dollars per week, beginning a 35-year association between Freeman and Bryan. The most immediate result was Douglas' appointment in the summer of 1910 as secretary of the State Tax Commission, which the General Assembly had created in March to reform Virginia's tax and assessment laws. His work for the Commission brought him close to some of the most important leaders of the commonwealth, including William Hodges Mann, James Taylor Ellyson and Richard Evelyn Byrd. The Commission's report, featuring an extensive appendix written by Freeman, appeared in December of 1911. In 1913 he returned to work for Bryan as an editorial assistant on the staff of the Times-Dispatch.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Freeman's career as a historian was progressing as another outgrowth of his work for Dr. McIlwaine and Mrs. Minor. A Calendar of Confederate Papers had appeared in 1908 and had been well received. Frederic Bancroft reviewed it in the American Historical Review and pronounced it to be "the historian's Baedeker for Richmond's best memorials of the Confederates." Bancroft was so

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<sup>2</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 28; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, May 23, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 111; Virginia State Tax Commission, Report to the General Assembly of Virginia by the Tax Commission Appointed to Make an Investigation of the System of Assessment, Revenue and Taxation Now in Force in this State (Richmond, 1911).

impressed with the Calendar, in fact, that he penned a personal note to Douglas prior to the appearance of the review. "I have read . . . your Calendar with so much pleasure that I feel like adding a few lines to what I have written for publication," he wrote. "I don't see how any one could have performed the task better than you have and I was hardly less than amazed by your breadth of view and accuracy." This high praise was well deserved, for the young editor of the Calendar did indeed demonstrate a remarkable range of knowledge and attention to detail. The volume's first 500 pages described the documents in the Confederate Museum's collection. These included maps, muster rolls, papers relating to the trial of Jefferson Davis, papers relating to the Richmond Campaign of 1864 and the papers of General William Nelson Rector Beall. Douglas enlisted the aid of his brother Allen in annotating the Museum's papers relating to the Confederate Medical Department. Some manuscripts were reprinted verbatim while others were abstracted. Footnotes explained statements made in the text and identified persons and places. The index included all names given in the text and references to specific subjects. The final part of the work was a descriptive bibliography of the Museum's collection of books and important pamphlets published or used in the

Confederacy.<sup>10</sup>

Another who was impressed with Freeman's work on the Calendar was Mr. Wymerley Jones DeRenne of Savannah, Georgia. His mother, Mrs. Mary DeRenne of Savannah, had donated her large collection of Confederate books and pamphlets to the Confederate Museum. In the Calendar Douglas had praised the DeRenne Collection as "the most valuable of the Library" and added: "At a time when Confederate publications were much more numerous and more easily acquired than at present, Mrs. DeRenne, with rare judgment, gathered a collection of Confederate publications second to none in the country." Appreciating Freeman's generous remarks about his mother and admiring the overall quality of the Calendar, DeRenne decided to pay a visit to Richmond and approach the budding historian about another editing project. In the spring of 1910, he contacted Douglas and outlined the project he had in mind. He invited Douglas to come to Savannah and examine the papers he had described. In a letter written from the Raleigh on June 14, Douglas assured De Renne that "nothing will give me more pleasure than the co-operation in an undertaking which bespeaks so much patriotism on your part and which will be of such great value to the people of the

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<sup>10</sup>Frederic Bancroft, Review of A Calendar of Confederate Papers, American Historical Review (April, 1909), 623; Frederic Bancroft to DSF, Feb. 19, 1909, Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.



South." Yet he was so heavily involved in newspaper and public health work that he found it impossible to make the journey to Savannah before De Renne left for his country home in upstate New York. He sought to reassure the Georgian that his "business arrangements will probably be such within the next few weeks that I shall have a good deal more leisure time and this I shall devote to the publication you suggested."<sup>11</sup>

As it turned out, Douglas spent most of his new-found leisure time on a tour of the western United States. A secretarial error prevented him from learning of De Renne's reply to his letter of June 14. Fortunately, De Renne persisted and wrote again in August, while Douglas was in the West. Upon his return in September, Douglas again affirmed his interest in the project. "I am yours to command," he wrote. "I can come and examine [the papers] whenever you are at home and can push the publication as rapidly as you may desire." The first meeting between Freeman and De Renne finally took place the next month when Douglas took a train to Mr. De Renne's vacation home on the

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<sup>11</sup>DSF (ed.), A Calendar of Confederate Papers with a Bibliography of Some Confederate Publications (Richmond, 1908), 501; William Harris Bragg, "'Our Joint Labor': W. J. De Renne, Douglas Southall Freeman, and Lee's Dispatches, 1910-1915," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Jan., 1989), 4-5, 7-8; DSF to W. J. De Renne, June 14, 1910, De Renne Family Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

banks of Lake Champlain at Westport, New York.<sup>12</sup>

Douglas was now well aware of the general nature of the project and its potential importance, but he did not actually see the papers he was to edit until several weeks later, when De Renne passed through Richmond on his way back to Savannah. The wealthy Georgian telephoned the young Virginian from the Hotel Jefferson and invited him to lunch. After an enjoyable meal, the two men went up to De Renne's room, where he took a three-quarter morocco volume from his Gladstone bag and asked Douglas to look at it. As Douglas opened the volume and began leafing through its pages, he quickly realized just what a treasure he held in his hands. The volume contained Robert E. Lee's confidential dispatches to Jefferson Davis. Most of these papers were originals, no copies of which had survived the evacuation of Richmond in 1865. As their whereabouts had remained a mystery, they had not been included in the Official Records of the war that had been published between 1881 and 1900. Now their owner was placing them in the hands of a 24-year-old historian with the request that he edit and annotate them for publication.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Bragg, "'Our Joint Labor,'" 8; DSF to W. J. De Renne, Sept. 14, 1910, De Renne Family Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Bragg, "'Our Joint Labor,'" 9-10; Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, "A High Calling: Douglas Southall Freeman and Robert E. Lee," in Robert Armour (ed.), Douglas Southall Freeman: Reflections by His Daughter, His Research Associate and a Historian (Richmond, 1986), 9-10; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 186.

Although he must have fairly trembled with excitement at the realization that he had been given the opportunity of a lifetime, Freeman's progress on the work was slow. Mr. De Renne pressed ahead, securing approval of the project from Captain Robert E. Lee, the general's son, and making preliminary contacts with a publisher. However, Douglas now began to complain of "baffling attacks of rheumatism which threaten, every now and then, to put a permanent end to my investigations." After examining the whole of the collection, he also confessed to "a deep and sincere regret that no more of the letters are original" and said that he "had hoped for better things." De Renne's publisher expressed other reservations:

We have not made any definite arrangement with Mr. De Renne for the publication of these letters. We told him that we were very much interested in the matter and in a late letter asked that we might see certain of the letters. We must say that those which you have sent disappoint us exceedingly. They seem to us to be merely in the nature of reports and would be technically interesting perhaps to military strategists, but would not, in our opinion, appeal to the general public.<sup>14</sup>

Undaunted by doubts, physical ailments or other work, Douglas pushed on with the task. He felt reassured that the unpublished letters were "in every respect the most important of the whole." By March, 1911, he was already

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<sup>14</sup>W. J. De Renne to Robert E. Lee, Jr., Oct. 28, 1910, DSF to W. J. De Renne, Feb. 16, 1911, Dodd, Mead and Company to DSF, March 16, 1911, all in De Renne Family Papers.

anticipating the completion of the project. Yet more than a year later, despite repeated assurances, it was still far from finished. A major reason for the delay was that De Renne, in June of 1911, brought Freeman another bound volume of papers. This volume, which De Renne had apparently never mentioned to Douglas previously, contained telegrams from General Lee to President Davis. At first the editor did not believe that the telegrams would long detain him, but in April, 1912, he told Mr. De Renne that "they offer some very interesting problems which must be solved." He said that he was striving "to make the finished task worthy of the writer of the letters and of the distinguished owner of them" and added that with no more duties to perform for the Tax Commission, he was "thus in a position to put more labor on our letters." But the jobs with the State Board of Health and the Virginia Anti-Tuberculosis Association remained, and in October, 1912, the overworked Dr. Freeman was stricken with a form of temporary paralysis that incapacitated him for several months. More rest apparently cured his condition, which had been variously diagnosed as multiple sclerosis and a potentially fatal thrombosis, and in September, 1913, he broke a long silence by writing to the increasingly exasperated De Renne: "With good fortune, I hope now to escape serious trouble at least for the rest of the year. Naturally, however, when I was laid up for [so] long, I got behind in all my work and in my finances as

well. Since recovery, I have been forced to work overtime on those things which brought an immediate return and have not been able quite to finish my work on the Lee papers." By the last week of October, 1913, it appeared that the end was indeed in sight: "I am glad to report that things are moving along splendidly and that I am now at work on the papers for February, 1865. I have only to finish the few remaining letters to April and to write the preface." He added optimistically that this was "but a matter of a few evenings' work." Yet it would still take more than a year to complete the project.<sup>15</sup>

Two projects that Douglas began during his first five years back in Richmond were never completed. One was an ambitious three-volume history of Virginia. In 1910 Douglas signed a contract with the Lewis Publishing Company of New York to complete by January, 1912, "a general history of the State of Virginia." Most of his task was "to edit what has been compiled in a general way by other gentlemen who are engaged in collating much of the earlier history of the State." Yet he was soon heavily involved in his work for the Tax Commission and the editing of Lee's correspondence with Davis and failed to meet the deadline called for in the

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<sup>15</sup>Bragg, "Our Joint Labor," 12-17; DSF to W. J. De Renne, March 4, March 25, Aug. 18, Aug. 24, Dec. 11, 1911, April 29, 1912, Sept. 8, Oct. 24, 1913, all in De Renne Family Papers.

contract.<sup>16</sup>

The other unfinished project was the publication of his dissertation. Although he had worked diligently on the dissertation, it had taken a back seat to his work on the Calendar during much of his final year at Hopkins. The final product, "The Attitude of Political Parties in Virginia to Slavery and Secession (1846-1861)," was approved by his two-man dissertation committee, Professors Ballagh and Andrews, but both men expressed some reservations. The crusty Ballagh told him: "Freeman, the research on this paper is excellent, indeed most exceptional. But you will never make a writer. Your purple prose is execrable." Dr. Andrews refused to discuss the question of style, except to say that it "should be a dally interest and one that should mark improvement with everything you write." As for content, Andrews felt that the paper "needs a little more interpretation under its facts, and a little more conviction in its conclusions." Still, Andrews thought that it could be published as part of the Johns Hopkins Studies in History and Political Science if Freeman would "comb it over and throw a little more imagination into it." At least twice during 1909, Professor Vincent requested him to submit the paper for publication, but Douglas never complied.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Clipping, Richmond Evening Journal, 1910, Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>17</sup>Cheek, "Reflections," 27; Charles M. Andrews to DSF, July 29, 1908, John M. Vincent to DSF, June 25, Oct. 8, 1909, all in DSFP-LC, Box 4.

A fire in the Hopkins archives seriously damaged the copy of Freeman's dissertation on deposit there, and the copy he retained in his personal papers is so heavily revised and disordered as to be nearly unreadable. The paper appears to be less than 200 pages of political narrative. Not surprisingly, in view of its author's later achievements in the field of biography, its best parts are personality sketches of some of the key figures in the secession crisis. Apparently, Freeman lost interest in revising the manuscript for publication. He learned to moderate his "purple prose" and to simplify his style, but thereafter he devoted his literary efforts to the military history of the Confederacy rather than to politics. In 1927 he loaned the dissertation and his notes to Henry T. Shanks, who was working on a similar thesis at the University of North Carolina, with the assertion that "I have no reason to assume that I shall ever print my dissertation and for that reason, as well as from consideration of Mr. Shanks, would be most unwilling to stand in his way."<sup>10</sup>

Despite his failure to publish his dissertation and the proposed history of Virginia and his slow progress on Lee's dispatches, Douglas had, by 1913, achieved a measure of notoriety in the Old Dominion. His first boss at the Times-Dispatch, Henry Sydnor Harrison, had left the

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<sup>10</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 193-94; DSF to Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, Oct. 14, 1927, DSFP-LC, Box 11; Henry T. Shanks to DSF, Jan. 12, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 13.

editorship of the paper in 1910 in order to pursue a career as a novelist. The hero of Harrison's novel Queed, published in 1911, was a studious young man with a reverence for hard work and the careful allotment of time for each task and whose first public work involved the writing of a series of newspaper editorials on tax reform. The author warned Douglas not to read it "with the expectation of finding any familiar faces, for the fact is that there aren't anything of the sort." Yet there can be little doubt that Harrison based young Dr. Queed mainly, if loosely, on young Dr. Freeman. Certainly many readers saw the similarities. As one Virginia lady wrote to Mr. Harrison: "I hear that 'Queed' has escaped from the pages of your novel and has even ventured to Roanoke to deliver lectures and his name is Douglas Freeman, or something of the sort."<sup>15</sup>

If there remained some small doubt as to the true identity of Dr. Queed, the Danville Register expressed no doubts about Dr. Freeman in a 1911 editorial entitled "A Brilliant Young Virginian." Wrote the editor: "We have heard and met and know Dr. Freeman. As a matter of simple justice we desire here to record the fact that we regard him as a man of unusual talent and ability and of remarkable

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<sup>15</sup>Henry S. Harrison to DSF, March 23, 1911, Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society; Claudine Ferguson to Henry S. Harrison, July 21, 1913, Henry Sydnor Harrison Papers, Manuscript Department, Duke University.



erudition when his age is considered, for he is still a young man." The Register reviewed Freeman's work with the Tax Commission, the Anti-Tuberculosis Association and the State Health Department and concluded: "He is all this at the age of twenty-five; added years insure for him a future large with promise."<sup>20</sup>

By his mid-twenties Douglas Freeman was already widely recognized as Virginia's young man eloquent. It remained for two wars -- one fought largely on the Old Dominion's soil half a century before, the other about to break over in Europe -- to provide him with the opportunity to achieve wider fame.

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<sup>20</sup>Danville Register, Jan. 20, 1911.

## CHAPTER V

### EDITOR-IN-ARMS

The years 1914 and 1915 were momentous ones for Douglas Freeman and for the world. At 5 p. m. on February 5, 1914, the young editorial assistant and Inez Virginia Goddin were married in a quiet ceremony at the home of the bride's mother, 1114 Floyd Avenue. After a honeymoon the couple set up housekeeping with Walker Freeman at the Raleigh. Inez did indeed prove to be the perfect wife for a man of Douglas' interests and habits. She loved him deeply and had complete faith in his ability to accomplish his many goals. Douglas paid her public tribute when he dedicated R. E. Lee "to I. G. F., who never doubted." Shy by nature, Inez did not resent the fact that her husband's devotion to work left little time for an extremely active social life. She proved so adept at managing the Freeman household that even after the birth of their three children, Douglas had plenty of time for work. And even as a newlywed, work was the dominant theme of Douglas Freeman's life.<sup>1</sup>

In the late summer of 1914, Freeman was finally able to report the completion of the editorial work on Lee's dispatches, including a long introduction to the collection. The introduction had proved troublesome. He had rewritten

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<sup>1</sup>Unidentified clipping, [Feb. 6, 1914], Freeman Scrapbook, 1886-1923, Virginia Historical Society.

it several times and still felt obliged to ask Mr. De Renne for a critique. De Renne suggested that he tone down his references to General James Longstreet and Longstreet's responsibility for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg. "As for the changes you make," Freeman replied on September 22, "that regarding Longstreet is certainly not only wise but I think generous. My original was a little too savage."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Freeman's first published opinions on the Gettysburg controversy placed him squarely in the Lee camp. This was understandable, for a major tenet of the Confederate faith was that Longstreet had lost the war at Gettysburg through his tardiness in carrying out Lee's orders on the second day of the great battle and had compounded his guilt by criticizing Lee's decision to send the divisions of Pickett, Pettigrew and Trimble against Cemetery Ridge the following day. This facet of the Confederate tradition had become especially popular in the Richmond of Freeman's youth, where William L. "Buck" Royall, Confederate veteran and newspaper editor, annually told a packed audience in the Academy of Music theater that Gettysburg was lost because of Longstreet's "contumacy, and the word is not too strong!" Richmond was also the home of

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<sup>2</sup>DSF to W. J. De Renne, Sept. 7, Sept. 13, 1914, De Renne Family Papers; DSF to W. J. De Renne, Sept. 15, 1914, DSFP-LC, Box 4; W. J. De Renne to DSF, [Sept. 21, 1914] and DSF to De Renne, Sept. 22, 1914, De Renne Family Papers.

the Southern Historical Society, whose publications frequently savaged Longstreet's reputation. For his part, Freeman rejected Longstreet's claims that Lee later admitted that his lieutenant had been right in arguing against the assault on Little Round Top on July 2, 1863 and the great charge against Cemetery Ridge on July 3. If the young editor of Lee's dispatches omitted, at De Renne's urging, his original reference to Longstreet's "attacks of self important dotage," he let stand his critique of Longstreet's memoir Manassas to Appomattox as a "questionable narrative" written by "an old man, soured by failure and embittered by circumstances." Though Lee accepted responsibility for the Confederate defeat, this was not, in Freeman's view, an admission that he had been wrong in ordering the assault against the Union position. The editor concluded: "Only in the knowledge which neither he nor Longstreet possessed on July 3 and in the realization that the attack which should not have failed did fail, was he prepared to admit that he would have followed a different course." Freeman praised Lee for refusing to avail himself of others' errors to escape his own responsibility, even at Gettysburg, where "merited reprimand of culpable lieutenants would have

absolved the commander-in-chief."<sup>3</sup>

Freeman's praise of Lee for refusing to criticize others and bravely bearing the blame for Gettysburg was typical of his attitude toward the transcendent figure of the Confederate faith. He had long admired Lee as a man, soldier and a model for behavior. Now he presented for the first time in print his evaluation of the Southern demigod, "who bore success with humility and failure with fortitude." He wrote that "one may end the letters with the belief that Lee the soldier was great but that Lee the man was greater by far." The war had subjected Lee the noble cavalier "to every test by which the heart of man may be tried. . . . And from it Lee emerged aged and worn, already in the shadow of the grave, but a stronger, nobler man than when he consecrated his sword to the service of Virginia and assumed command of her little army." Freeman believed, like his mentor Samuel Chiles Mitchell, that Lee's "St. Helena at Lexington was more glorious than his Austerlitz at

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<sup>3</sup>Bryan, The Sword Over the Mantel, 73; W. J. De Renne to DSF, [Sept. 21, 1914], De Renne Family Papers; DSF (ed.), Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A., to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65 (New York, 1915), xxix, 114. On the background of the Gettysburg controversy, see William Garrett Piston, Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History (Athens, Ga., 1987); Louis Decimus Rubin, Jr., A Gallery of Southerners (Baton Rouge, 1982), 184-91; Thomas Lawrence Connelly, The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society (New York, 1977), 83-90; Thomas Lawrence Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind (Baton Rouge, 1982), 30-38.

Chancellorsville. . . . Noble he was; nobler he became. The sufferings he endured were worth all they cost him in the example they gave the South of fortitude in disaster and courage in defeat." Thus, in his first public evaluation of Lee, Freeman expressed sentiments typical of the postbellum deification of the South's wartime hero.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Douglas felt the need for an example of fortitude and courage because of the trials he had endured during the editing of the dispatches. "Physical debility that threatened to wreck me, the hard necessity of long hours' work to make bread and meat, grinding routine, -- all these kept me back," he wrote to Mr. De Renne at the completion of the project. For a brief time it appeared that his sufferings would be for naught. De Renne's chosen publisher, Dodd, Mead and Company, rejected the finished product. Fortunately, G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York accepted the manuscript and published Lee's Dispatches in 1915.<sup>5</sup>

Freeman's most immediate reward from the publication of Lee's Dispatches was a gift of \$1000 from Mr. De Renne. This gift was important, for it enabled the Freemans to purchase their first home on Floyd Avenue. Yet even more important in the long run was the national exposure that the

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<sup>4</sup>DSF (ed.), Lee's Dispatches, xvii-xix.

<sup>5</sup>DSF to W. J. De Renne, Sept. 15, 1914, DSFP-LC, Box 4; Edward H. Dodd to W. J. De Renne, Oct. 13, 1914, De Renne Family Papers.

appearance of Lee's Dispatches brought to the young editor. Walter Lynwood Fleming reviewed the work for the Mississippi Valley Historical Review and commented: "The editor contributes a first class introduction and extensive notes, thus making the papers of much greater value and rendering it easier to use them. The index is all that can be asked. The editor has done a most creditable work." Eben Swift, writing in the American Historical Review, took Freeman to task for going "beyond the evidence he presents when he speaks of 'blunders and worse of subordinates,' 'culpable' lieutenants, 'others' errors,' etc. -- all matters upon which Lee, the master, was silent." Still, Swift pronounced the book "admirably edited" and praised Freeman for providing such complete notes "that it is not at all necessary to refer to other works for a full understanding." Writing in the Chicago Post, William E. Dodd maintained that none of the dispatches revealed why Lee "fought so rashly at Gettysburg on July 3, or why he allowed Grant to slip away from him after Cold Harbor. The editor makes a long argument against the criticism of E. P. Alexander that Lee was outgeneraled by his great antagonist, June 15 to 18, 1864. The letters do not sustain his contention." Professor Dodd concluded that Lee's Dispatches "is a welcome addition to the Lee literature, tho it does not change the estimate of the man or general at any point. It does, however, fill in the lacunae of the correspondence and this

will aid the specialist who may some day undertake a 'Life of Lee' the best opportunity in the field of American biography to him who knows enough of military things, of social conditions and the wills of our fathers who brought on the great American war."<sup>4</sup>

Dodd probably had no one particular in mind, but others did. Shortly after a favorable review of Lee's Dispatches appeared in the New York Times, Henry Sydnor Harrison attended a dinner in New York at which he sat next to Edward Livermore Burlingame, editor-in-chief for Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers. Mr. Burlingame had seen the review and asked the Virginian if he knew Freeman and whether he thought the editor of Lee's Dispatches could write a brief biography of the General for Scribner's "American Crisis Series." With thoughts of young Dr. Queed probably running through his head, Harrison replied that indeed he thought Freeman could perform the task. Burlingame contacted Douglas, who signed a contract for a book of 75,000 words and estimated that the project would require two years. Freeman later saw the hand of Providence at work in the chain of opportunity that led to the writing of R. E. Lee. Indirectly, at least, the chance to write the life story of his idol stemmed from his work at the Virginia State Library

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<sup>4</sup>DSF to W. J. De Renne, Nov. 4, 1914, De Renne Family Papers; Mississippi Valley Historical Review (March, 1917), 540-42; American Historical Review (Jan., 1916), 357-59; Chicago Post, Sept. 3, 1915.



in the summer of 1906. That two-week job almost a decade ago had given him the opportunity to compile A Calendar of Confederate Papers and to work for Mr. Harrison at the Times-Dispatch. Publication of the Calendar had led to Lee's Dispatches. Now the Dispatches and the friendship with Harrison had led to the opportunity to tell the story of Lee and, through the eyes of their commander, of the men whose story he had first resolved to write in 1903.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the story of the Civil War would have to wait as the drama of an even greater conflict unfolded. When the guns of August, 1914 barked in Europe, Douglas was completing his work on Lee's Dispatches and earning a living as an editorial assistant on the staff of the Richmond News Leader. He had come over to the afternoon paper from the morning Times-Dispatch when the Bryan family sold their interest in the Times-Dispatch in order to concentrate their efforts on the News Leader. He watched the war in Europe with growing interest, as he noted "the remarkable similarity of some of Lee's campaigns to those of Joffre." As he began to write the paper's editorials on the European war, he made frequent references to a war more familiar to his Virginia readers. "In the hideous struggle in Europe, not less than in the peaceful progress of the South, we see Lee, we see Jackson," he wrote on Lee's 108th birthday.

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<sup>7</sup>Cheek, "A High Calling," 10; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 182-91.

"For unless we much misread the strategy of the European War, it is infinitely more that of Lee and his great lieutenant than it is that of Napoleon or von Moltke." He cited the use of railroads, inner line defenses, extended flank and rapid concentration as military principles adopted from Lee and Jackson. He might also have mentioned futile frontal assaults against rifled weapons as tactical parallels between the two wars, but he did not.<sup>e</sup>

Freeman used geographical analogies as well as strategical and tactical comparisons to bring the Great War closer to his readers. One example will suffice:

For a ready understanding of the situation, we shall ask readers to substitute a familiar for an unfamiliar country and to conceive of Richmond in its relation to the James as Peronne on the Somme. If we imagine the James river running upstream, the terrain corresponds accurately enough. Bapaume is in the same relative location as Ashland, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac corresponds to the Peronne-Bapaume highway, and Shirley is about where the important city of Ham is situated. . . . The first assaults, as all men know, were delivered simultaneously on the Richmond - Ashland line and on the northern end of the Richmond - Shirley line. . . . Richmond has thus been in some measure isolated. In military parlance, it is on a double salient, with the French and British on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac and with the French close to the James from the vicinity of Swansboro as far south as Bermuda Hundred. It would seem to be only a question of time before the attacks to the east of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac and south on the Bermuda Hundred line will isolate the city completely and force its

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<sup>e</sup>DSF to W. J. De Renne, Oct. 17, 1914, De Renne Family Papers; NL, Jan. 19, 1915.

evacuation.<sup>9</sup>

Although some knowledgeable readers considered Freeman's constant comparisons between the Great War in Europe and the Civil War in Virginia to be "a far-fetched exercise," even his critics admitted that they "led the paper into unprecedented popularity." The News Leader's daily circulation increased by several thousand until it became the most widely read newspaper in Virginia. President Woodrow Wilson was said to keep a copy of the News Leader on his desk at the White House. Undoubtedly, the popularity of Freeman's articles on the World War and his increasing prominence as an expert on military affairs led to his appointment as editor of the News Leader in 1915, before he had reached the age of thirty.<sup>10</sup>

If President Wilson actually read the News Leader that he kept on his desk, he must have liked not only the young editor's detailed treatment of military campaigns but also the paper's consistent support for his foreign policy. Like most Southern editors and a majority of Southerners in general, Freeman favored the Allied cause while applauding Wilson's efforts to keep the United States out of war. He saw the war as a conflict between representative institutions and German militarism, a militarism that had to

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Oct. 11, 1916.

<sup>10</sup>Virginus Dabney, Across the Years: Memories of a Virginian (Garden City, 1978), 107; Emily Clark, Stuffed Peacocks (New York, 1927), 216.

be crushed before there could be any talk of peace. Yet he believed official neutrality to be the best course for America and approved the President's vigorous assertion of neutral trading rights. "The United States cannot, of course, permit their ships to be denied rights at sea," he wrote on May 3, 1915, "and they will not allow any belligerent, be he of the Teuton alliance or the entente, to abridge in any way that freedom of trade which is the privilege of all neutrals."<sup>11</sup>

Just four days later a German submarine torpedoed and sank the British luxury liner Lusitania off the Irish coast. Of the 1,198 victims, 128 were Americans. From this day forward, the News Leader dropped all pretense of neutrality of thought. "We need not speak of the crime itself," Freeman wrote the next day:

It was the vandalism of Louvain without the provocation. It was the bombardment of Reims without the opportunity of any answering defense. It was the ravaging of Belgium without the excuse of "military necessity." It was deliberate piracy and cold blooded assassination, and is on precisely the same moral plane as the knife-thrust of the lurking criminal who strikes in the dark from the mouth of an alley. Warnings do not extenuate and the presence of arms aboard the Lusitania does not palliate. No maxim of international law can even be cited to excuse this act, even in the slightest; it rests solely on the doctrine that the strong will of Germany must and shall prevail -- by murder if need be.

The sinking confirmed that Germany "has forfeited her last

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<sup>11</sup>George Brown Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 38-39; NL, Feb. 13, May 3, 1915.

claim to be treated as a member of the family of nations, and that she has forced this country to the most extreme measures short of war itself." At the end of May, Freeman went even farther when he declared that "the United States must either go to war or take extreme measures short of war."<sup>12</sup>

President Wilson opted for measures short of war, and Freeman endorsed the measures by which Wilson finally secured from Germany a pledge to abandon unrestricted submarine warfare. "Mr. Wilson put Berlin on notice and in the face of the blood-thirsty factions of the German reichstag, has compelled an unwilling kaiser to surrender the most devilish weapon of this inhuman war, his lawless submarine," Freeman wrote in an editorial published shortly before the election of 1916. He agreed with those who charged that it took Wilson months to wring the pledge from Germany. "but even so," the News Leader contended, "the diplomacy of Woodrow Wilson has achieved more for safe travel at sea than the allied fleets have been able to accomplish . . . in twenty-seven months of cruising."<sup>13</sup>

Yet Freeman continued to see a fundamental conflict of ideals between America and Germany. Although he wished to see Germany chastened rather than destroyed, he maintained that it was "to the interest of the United States to see

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., May 8, May 10, May 31, 1915.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Nov. 4, 1916.

Germany removed as a menace to the world," for "Germany must cease to be Germany or cease to be a friendly nation."

While he believed that the Allies could defeat Germany without direct American intervention, he had been a strong advocate of American military preparedness since before the Lusitania incident. In an editorial praising Richmond's Congressman, Andrew Jackson Montague, for his support of preparedness measures, Freeman again appealed to the city's martial tradition:

Perhaps it is because we live where the marks of battle still linger. Perhaps it is because we Richmond people know that the James river would be one of the first objectives of the enemy in case of invasion. Perhaps it is because, as descendants of the veterans of all the American wars, we of Richmond have more than the average interest in military matters. But whatever the reason for the attitude of the Third district, Mr. Montague may be sure that for one man who would have America defenseless, there are twenty voters of Richmond who want to see the United States strong enough to repel any enemy at any time.<sup>14</sup>

Freeman praised the preparedness program finally adopted by Congress in 1916 as "the most far-seeing defense measure in the history of the country" and "a monument to America's awakened sense of world responsibility," but he continued to call for universal compulsory service. "We must build a new army on a new foundation," he maintained. "And if so, that foundation must be compulsory because volunteer service fails, universal because only in that way

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Aug. 14, 1915, April 19, May 12, 1916.

can it be democratic." He qualified this demand only by insisting "that the issue be not made one between the professional officer and the citizen soldier, between the regular army and the national guardsmen." He held that officers should be recruited from the ranks and that the increase in the number of professional soldiers should be no larger than absolutely necessary. "Otherwise," he argued, "we are headed for rampant militarism."<sup>15</sup>

As a loyal Democrat and ardent admirer of the President's progressive domestic policies, Freeman applauded Wilson's re-election in 1916 as "a vindication of the president personally, and an endorsement of his theory, which, as far as possible, he put into practice, that the president should be a national as well as a party leader." Yet when Germany announced, even before Wilson's second inauguration, the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Freeman's calls for action became more strident, and his patience with the President began to wear thin. Though as late as early February, 1917, he still warned against a too hasty resort to war, his denunciations of American pacifists and the "little group of willful men" in the Senate who filibustered against Wilson's proposal to arm American merchant ships took on a harsh tone. When on March 18 German submarines sank three American merchantmen, the editor could restrain his passion no longer. "Rejected in

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Sept. 8, Dec. 8, Dec. 19, 1916.

all things and insulted beyond endurance, our final acceptance of German challenge would be proof to all the world that no nation can live at peace with the common enemy of mankind," he wrote. "The president should at once convene congress in extra session and call for a declaration of war -- that is our deliberate opinion." The time had come for Wilson to "throw aside his cloak and show beneath it the arms of a warrior or the cassock of a pacifist." Freeman left no doubt that he wanted to see the warrior's armor: "Better a generation's impotence as a minority party than an hour's concession to disloyalty; better defeat in the next election than disgrace in the eyes of the world; better a battle to the finish than a parley for the sake of politics." When Wilson finally went before Congress to ask for a declaration of war, Freeman pronounced the occasion "a great night in the march of democracy." At last the United States had been called to do its duty "to our future security, to our democratic sister nations, to our ideals and to our God."<sup>14</sup>

Although he was only 30 years of age when Congress declared war, Freeman was disqualified for military service because of the hernia he had suffered in childhood. Yet he believed that victory required some contribution from every citizen. He made his own contribution through his News

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Nov. 17, 1916, Feb. 3, Feb. 22, March 5, March 8, March 19, March 31, April 3, 1917.



Leader editorials, in which he not only continued to analyze battles and campaigns of the boys in Europe but also exhorted his fellow citizens on the home front to perform their duty to the war effort. He reminded his readers that "most wars of the past have been ordered by the rich and fought by the poor," but declared that this war should be different. If the government had the right to demand that a boy give his services and risk his life in defense of his country, it had the equal right to demand that the farmer raise certain crops and sell them at a certain price and that the wealthy manufacturer, merchant or capitalist bear the war's cost by subscribing to loans and paying heavier taxes. "The government has more than the right," he concluded. "It has the solemn duty." The popularity of Freeman's wartime editorials contributed to his growing popularity as a public speaker. After America's entry into the war, he quickly became Richmond's first choice as an orator for patriotic gatherings. He also began delivering daily news commentaries via Richmond radio, an activity he continued for the rest of his life.<sup>17</sup>

The outcome of the war served to buttress Freeman's religious faith. Entitling his editorial for November 11, 1918 "The Stone Was Rolled Away," he proclaimed: "God's is the victory: His be the praise! Before the opened tomb of

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1917; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 356.

the old world's deliverance, exultation must wait on thanksgiving and every emotion must yield to praise to Him whose right in might hath prevailed." He credited the hand of God for every Allied victory of the Great War. "God it was who stayed the Hun upon the Marne, and God who halted him upon the Yperlee," he wrote. "He it was who kept inviolate the bloody bastion of unsullied Verdun and He it was who stood between our withdrawing allies and the pursuing foe last March, in that dread nightmare of retreat. Slowly, inexorably, and with that greater mercy that puts the lives of nations above those of men, God has brought us to this hour."<sup>10</sup>

A young lieutenant who was convalescing in the base hospital at Camp Lee, Virginia read this editorial and wrote to its author to express his "keen disappointment" and "vehement disapproval." The young officer asked if Freeman really saw "in the tremendous events of the past four years, in the shrapnel-torn civilization of Europe, and, now, in the cessation of the Great Carnage, only the unfolding of the plans of some vague anthropomorphism which you name mysteriously 'God'?" Freeman's reply was, in the words of historian John L. Gignilliat, "the most explicit statement of his faith in the action of God's will through history."

You would say that the war was wasteful and

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<sup>10</sup>NL, Nov. 11, 1918.

purposeless. I would maintain that through it ran a purpose. That purpose I would call the will of God, the ultimate God of the world. I believe that purpose runs through all the channels of history, a current that carries men toward a distant sea that we call for lack of a better name, The Kingdom of God. I cannot believe that men are merely born to struggle against their brothers in an animal survival of the fittest and then to perish. I believe they are constantly moving onward in an evolution which has its end, even as it had its beginning, in God. And even when I see men thrown back in their civilization, through some great disaster, such as war, it is to me merely a stage in the great process of development. . . . The autocrat had to go and much life had to be spent in destroying him, yet life will continue still, glorified, I think, and chastened by what it has endured. I regard that as the work of God: you may classify him as you may. Nor do I find the war irreconcilable with the view that if there is a God he must be a God of Love. If you have experienced much of life, you have found that peace is often purchasable only in pain. You may say that He cannot be a God who makes pain the price of peace. I can only reply that some of us cannot value peace until we have known pain. In the prospect of peace on earth and of ended wars, I confess I see a Mercy that will prove greater than that mercy which we craved as we saw Belgian women raped and a civilization submerged. I have read history in vain unless it means a real liberty after a reign of terror, a real tolerance after this world's St. Bartholemew's eves and a real love after hate has burned itself out.

Freeman was to be dismayed by the war's ultimate consequences both at home and abroad. Yet for at least a decade after the Armistice, he gave no evidence that his faith in man's progress through Divine will was

diminished.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly Freeman must have seen the hand of God at work in his own life as 1918 drew to a close. His two weeks of work at the Virginia State Library a dozen years before had led ultimately to the opportunity to write a biography of his hero, Robert E. Lee. He was already contemplating expanding this project beyond its original scope into an ambitious attempt to write the definitive study of the General. At the same time, the Great War had provided him with an opportunity to demonstrate his considerable knowledge of current military affairs to a wide audience and contributed to his appointment as editor of the News Leader. Though he had never put on a uniform, war had done as much to shape the career of Douglas Freeman as it had most men who had worn the gray or the khaki.

<sup>19</sup>Russell G. Smith to DSF, Nov. 15, 1918 and DSF to Smith, no date, both in DSFP-LC, Box 8; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 358-59.

## CHAPTER VI

### A LIBERAL EDITOR IN THE AGE OF NORMALCY

Even though Douglas Freeman was often at his best when writing of wars past and present, he devoted the early years of his newspaper editorship to the causes of peace abroad and progressive reform at home. In so doing he considered himself to be a liberal, reform-minded editor. Although political labels are often difficult to apply accurately, Freeman's views generally were liberal within the context of time and place. Moreover, he was a liberal under his own definition of the term:

A true liberal . . . neither is disdainful of the past nor enslaved to it, neither contemptuous of the present nor afraid of the future. He regards yesterday and today as the two fixed points by which to project tomorrow. Never does he experiment in order to destroy, but always in an effort to improve. The axe is never wielded where the scalpel suffices. In the knowledge that existence can be retrogression as well as progress, he goes on, but he slip[s] back by standing still. Conscious of his limitations and of the certainty of error, he is convinced that an open mind is the first requisite in opening the way. Tolerant even of intolerance, he seeks above all to learn by honest effort. This liberalism is not a program but an approach.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Freeman had neither the temperament nor the philosophical outlook to be a crusading editor. His faith in the ultimate progress of man through the will of God

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<sup>1</sup>DSF to Henry Preston, Nov. 24, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 112.

generally prevented him from expressing frustration or impatience in his editorials. Though he could employ strong language to denounce policies and practices that he disapproved, he refrained from personal attacks upon men with whom he disagreed. He usually preferred tactful persuasion and encouragement to faultfinding and ridicule. Freeman's deferential relationship with the News Leader's publisher, John Stewart Bryan, also served to restrain the young editor's passion. He and Bryan agreed on most public questions, but when there was disagreement Freeman deferred to the older man's wishes. He kept his boss closely informed on local and state affairs whenever Mr. Bryan was away and sought his opinion on all controversial matters of importance.<sup>2</sup>

Bryan supported Woodrow Wilson for President in 1912, and his editor provided ringing endorsements of Wilson's progressive accomplishments when the President sought re-election:

New freedom for industry is the central thought of the Underwood tariff and the federal reserve act. New freedom for childhood is the golden chord that runs through the child-labor law. New freedom for commerce prompted the repeal of the Panama tolls provision. New freedom for the farmer is the motive of the rural credits act. New freedom for the calm discussion and just analysis of a portentous labor dispute led to the passage of the Adamson bill.

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<sup>2</sup>Mary Wells Ashworth, "Douglas Southall Freeman: The Man and the Making of a Book," in Armour (ed.), Douglas Southall Freeman, 17; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 204.

Ironically, the "New Freedom" program of domestic reform was nearing its end when the admiring Freeman became editor of the News Leader. Yet he found even more to admire in Wilson's foreign policy. Carefully ignoring American intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Freeman praised Wilson for his reversal of the Latin American policies of his Republican predecessors, who had "shortened not a thong and lightened not a blow in lashing the trembling governments of Latin-America." The editor did not question the rightness of Wilson's intervention in Mexico but commended the President for not resorting to war and for realizing that "it is for the strong, unperturbed, to be gentle because they are strong." Wilson had "sought and found the surest, shortest road to the regeneration of a ruined republic, the road of mercy and assistance."<sup>a</sup>

Freeman's support for Wilson's dealings with the belligerents in the European war has already been noted. Believing as he did that "God led America into this war to work His will," Freeman saw the hand of God at work in the President's proposals for peace and a League of Nations to enforce that peace. "No such league . . . could be more than Utopian unless we had, in the coming peace conference, the world's greatest opportunity to make lasting and righteous adjustments of practically every question of race and boundary," he wrote. "Perhaps that is the reason God

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<sup>a</sup>NL, Nov. 2, Nov. 3, 1916.

saw fit to put practically every world power in the war." As opposition to the League grew, Freeman countered that a League "strong enough to enforce a peace of Justice" was the only alternative to "a treaty, the injustice of which will be so great that it will render impossible a renewal of the war by either Germany or Austria within the next century." Since such a vindictive peace would of necessity violate ethnic boundaries, a strong League was really "indispensable to the peace of the world." The League would also reduce colonial tensions and provide "a chance for backward peoples" to mount up industrially, socially and politically under League-directed tutelage. In short, Wilson's plan was the only one that gave any genuine promise of peace because it was the only solution based on Justice.\*

When Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts introduced his "Round Robin" resolution against American acceptance of the League, Freeman denounced it as "a deliberate negation of every righteous principle for which America has been fighting in this war." As opposition to the Treaty of Versailles and its provisions for the League mounted in the Republican-controlled Senate, Freeman reconciled himself to the hope that the peace would still be ratified with "mild" reservations. Yet when Lodge proposed a series of "strong" reservations to the treaty, the

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\*Ibid., July 31, 1917, Jan. 9, 1918, Jan. 10, Jan. 31, 1919.



News Leader declared in boldface type: "TO ACCEPT THE RESERVATIONS IS TO DENY THE FAITH OF THOSE FIFTY THOUSAND MEN WHO FELL IN FRANCE. TO WRITE THEM INTO THE TREATY WOULD BE TO SOUND THE 'ALERT' FOR ANOTHER WORLD WAR. TO PERMIT THEM TO STAND UNCHALLENGED AS THE STUDIED EXPRESSION OF THIS NATION'S SENTIMENT WOULD BE TO BRAND AMERICA WITH THE IRON OF IMPERIALISM IN THE MARKET PLACE OF HISTORY." In the end, however, Freeman urged supporters of the treaty and the League to compromise. He sensed that the public had drifted "away from the conviction that ratification without reservations was a political necessity and an international duty." The early enthusiasm was gone; some skepticism had taken its place. "Politically, it is always dangerous to fight under a waning moon," he warned, and he advised the Democratic party not to make the election of 1920 a referendum on ratification without reservation.<sup>5</sup>

That election proved to be a deep disappointment to Freeman. His first choice for the Presidency was Herbert Clark Hoover, whose work as Relief Commissioner in Belgium and United States Food Administrator he had greatly admired. Hoover declared himself to be "an Independent Progressive," which the progressive editor of the News Leader took to mean that he would accept neither the Republican nomination on a "stand-pat Leonard Wood - Harding platform" nor the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., March 4, Oct. 17, Oct. 23, 1919, March 9, March 19, March 20, 1920.

Democratic nomination on a "radical McAdoo platform." In sum, Freeman thought that Hoover "professes to be in principle if not in agreed detail -- what the Democratic party ought always to be -- progressive." He urged the Democratic National Committee to adopt a preliminary draft of a platform that would be acceptable to Mr. Hoover, who, he contended, "is the strongest presidential possibility in the United States today, commands the largest general following and best exemplifies those qualities for which a country, disgusted with petty politics, is clamoring." Yet just a few days after this ringing endorsement, Freeman told Mr. Bryan that he was "really very much disappointed at Hoover's behavior" and felt that the Democrats could not consider him. "I hardly think he has been frank," Freeman said.<sup>4</sup>

He still found Hoover, "that great man and wretched politician," preferable to the other Republican candidates and was dismayed at the GOP's choice of Ohio Senator Warren Gamaliel Harding. At least he saw consistency in the choice. "Having adopted a meaningless and cowardly platform," he wrote of the Republican convention, "it chose a colorless nominee." He pronounced the Republican candidate to be a reactionary on the problems of labor and a tool of big business. "Never prominent enough to arouse

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., March 10, 1920; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, March 31, 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 5.

antagonism," he wrote of the Ohioan, "but always sympathetic with the Old Guard, Harding was agreed upon as the nominee not because of the record he had made, but because of the enemies he had not made."<sup>7</sup>

Freeman felt that the Republican ticket of Harding and Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge could be beaten by "strong men on a strong platform." Yet more to be feared than a Harding victory was "the temptation to radicalism" presented to the Democrats by the American Federation of Labor's denunciation of the Republican platform, the control of the convention by big business and the attitude of both Harding and Coolidge toward labor. That temptation had to be resisted at all costs, he maintained:

Ours is a party of liberalism, of sane liberalism, as opposed not less to radicalism than to reaction. The Democratic party can endorse collective bargaining; the Democratic party can repudiate any such sentiments as those that led Harding to demand a return to the antebellum industrial conditions. But the Democrats cannot and will not, for the sake of support from the A.F. of L. or from any other quarter, endorse government ownership of railroads, the Plumb plan or the nationalization of the mines.<sup>8</sup>

With Hoover out of the picture, the News Leader endorsed Virginia's own Carter Glass for the Democratic nomination, even while admitting that the Old Dominion's status as a "safe" Democratic state made Glass's nomination unlikely. Freeman praised Wilson's Secretary of the

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<sup>7</sup>NL, June 14, 1920.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Treasury for his brains, his record and his courage and declared him to be "the man best suited to carry on the work undertaken by a Democratic administration and merely interrupted, it is to be hoped, by the accidental election of a Republican congress in 1918." He maintained that it "will be quite a remarkable commentary upon the cowardice of our Politics if two years after the biggest accomplishments in the history of our nation, as of the world, no man who had a hand in the big things will be nominated," and he lamented that a candidate's political availability depended on his residence in a pivotal state and his lack of responsibility for any mistakes that necessarily accompanied the accomplishments of the previous administration.\*

The "most available choice" for the Democrats proved to be Governor James M. Cox of Ohio. Freeman believed that Cox's views on ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, on labor and on prohibition of alcoholic beverages "generally reflect the sentiment of the South" and characterized him as "a reliable and courageous man," though having done nothing of great importance. In short, the Ohio Governor was not a statesman but was "the best man the Democrats could nominate for a difficult campaign," given his residence in a swing state and his lack of ties to the Wilson administration. The News Leader pronounced Governor Cox's nomination

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\*Ibid., June 21, 1920; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, May 17, 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 177.

"satisfactory" and worked hard for the Democratic ticket of Cox and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The editor gradually warmed to his task, as American ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and participation in the League of Nations became the focus of the campaign. On the eve of the election, Freeman summarized what was at stake: "America is not deciding the destiny of this generation, but the destiny of the children who, twenty years hence, will have to bear arms in case of another conflict. . . . The basic question is whether America is to take the long view or the short, is to decide for the ease of this generation or for the safety of the next. It is a sacred, an awesome question." Yet he feared that the Republicans had marshalled the forces of discontent in the country and would win the election.<sup>10</sup>

When his fears became reality, he commented that although "Mr. Cox was by every count the better candidate," neither Cox nor Harding was really the first choice of the people. He lamented the fact that "the contest for a successor to Wilson, a president great by any standard, should have been between a successful governor who had little experience in national affairs and a Republican senator, whose chief distinction was that he was innocuous and inconspicuous." Freeman considered this to be all the more remarkable "when America had in Herbert Hoover a

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<sup>10</sup>DSF to Allen W. Freeman, April 30, 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 6; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, June 14, 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 177; NL, July 6, Nov. 1, 1920.

man who had performed superbly a task as difficult as that of Wilson or of Clemenceau." He felt that the nation "probably can survive Harding" but questioned the wisdom of a nominating system that produced great presidents only as "political accidents or providential gifts." He did not despair for the Democratic party, but he again warned Democrats to avoid the temptation to swing toward radicalism or toward reaction. The hope of the party, he maintained, "lies in consistent middle-of-the-road liberalism."<sup>11</sup>

The News Leader generally followed Freeman's prescription during the Twenties. Even with his hopes for American participation in the League of Nations dashed, he continued to be an outspoken proponent of international cooperation to ensure peace. He became an ardent advocate of multilateral reductions in warships. The News Leader supported Senator William E. Borah's call for a conference to discuss naval disarmament and heartily endorsed the results of the conference that met in Washington in late 1921 and early 1922. "For the first time in the history of modern nations," the editor wrote, "a limitation of armament by international agreement is a fact. One need theorize no longer, nor argue that it can be done: It has been done. And if done in the case of capital ships, why not hereafter in the case of submarines or even aircraft?" A later conference at Geneva sought to extend the terms of the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Nov. 3, Nov. 5, Nov. 6, 1920.

Washington agreement to other classes of ships, but negotiations failed. Freeman attributed this failure to the fact that advocates of big navies were allowed to dominate the conference. "It was altogether a victory for the navies over the state departments," he wrote, "except, perhaps, in the case of Japan, whose delegation was well-balanced." He denounced the American "big-navy crowd" and maintained that Great Britain had contributed almost nothing to world peace during the postbellum years. "The imperialists are in the saddle," he said of the British government. Yet despite his disappointment over the failure of the Geneva conference, he remained hopeful for the future of arms limitation, provided that "the friends of limitation shape the counsels of limitation."<sup>12</sup>

The prevention of war remained the central focus of Freeman's writings on foreign affairs throughout the 1920s. He frequently used patriotic occasions to urge international disarmament. "Memorial Day never will be worthy of those we seek to memorialize until we make it Peace Day -- and then, as quickly as the cooperation of other nations makes possible -- Disarmament Day!" he wrote in 1921. On the sixth anniversary of the end of the Great War, he told his readers that "the noblest ideal of the war was enduring peace." By 1927 he had even come to doubt the righteousness

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., June 8, June 30, 1921, Feb. 6, 1922, Aug. 5, Aug. 31, 1927.

of America's participation in the conflict:

Even those who cannot see now in what way they might have done more in civil life for their country in 1917 feel no pride in their achievement. They do not know how much of their behavior reflected devotion and how much hysteria. They are not sure whether they followed the light or the mob. They cannot say what credit they deserve for discerning a world-issue, or what blame for yielding to world-propaganda they later helped to spread. . . . Yesterday is lost; only in tomorrow is there hope. And for tomorrow only one thing is sure -- that by God's help the voices of those who answered 'Aye' to war in 1917 will shout 'No' in the teeth of every man who seeks in any guise or by any excuse to thrust America into another war!

It is not surprising, then, that Freeman welcomed the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact for the outlawry of war in 1928. He recognized the treaty's weaknesses, but he believed it could succeed if the world sustained the "will to peace" and "the continuing will to set up those agencies of investigation and adjudication that will give no excuse for resort to arms." This placed a particular burden on the United States to adhere to the decisions of the World Court. "From the Quai d'Orsay," he argued, "the road of duty leads to the Hague; from the renunciation of war, honor and obligation call America to subscribe to the world court."<sup>12</sup>

Freeman was equally consistent in his condemnation of American imperialism in the Western Hemisphere during the Twenties. His criticism of US policy in Latin America began

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., May 30, 1921, Nov. 11, 1924, April 6, 1927, Aug. 27, 1928; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Aug. 27, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 178.



even before Wilson left office. While he did not reject the necessity for American intervention in Mexico out of hand, Freeman demanded that the policy of friendship be tried first. "Let it not be said for one moment that friendship has failed in our dealings with the republics of Central and South America," he contended. "Where tried -- seldom enough, Heaven knows -- it has wrought wonders." He denounced the selfishness and greed of those who urged intervention to protect American investments and compared America's past attitude toward Mexico with that of antebellum Prussia toward the lesser states of Eastern Europe. Even Prussia "never fathered a more wicked propaganda than that which urges the United States to 'clean up' Mexico." In 1924 the News Leader urged the US government to warn all American businessmen and investors with interests in Mexico that they must accept the risks of heavy taxation and possible expropriation and "must not expect the army and navy of the United States to make good their blunders." He decried the continuing American presence in Haiti, which amounted to an unofficial protectorate, as "in violation of all laws." He wondered how there could be an American protectorate when there was no provision for a protectorate under the American constitution. Even worse was President Coolidge's intervention in Nicaragua "without the consent of congress, in plain defiance of the constitution." Freeman declared

that "Andrew Johnson was impeached for far less than Calvin Coolidge has done, with only the voice of a few liberals raised in protest."<sup>14</sup>

In general, Freeman repudiated the Monroe Doctrine as "a doctrine of dollar diplomacy for American exploitation and for America only." When the doctrine was originally promulgated, the United States "had acted as a father to the son." But now the son was grown, and although the United States still had a duty to befriend her southern neighbors, "the duty to befriend implies no privilege to plunder." The editor was particularly disgusted with Coolidge, who was "reshaping the Monroe doctrine into a policy indefensible in theory and dangerous in action" because of his belief in "a new sacrosanctity of foreign investments." Freeman urged Americans "to forget there is such a thing as the Monroe doctrine" and to win Latin America's friendship "by being friendly and by doing friendly acts." This included, among other things, learning Latin America's languages and customs and displaying "co-ordinated common-sense in the extension of credit, whether for goods or for public improvements."<sup>15</sup>

Freeman voiced similar opinions about American imperialism in China. With the giant of Asia in the throes of civil war, Freeman feared a clamor for US intervention to

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<sup>14</sup>NL, Dec. 2, 1919, June 1, 1920, Oct. 23, Dec. 1, 1924, Aug. 22, 1928.

<sup>15</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, April 11, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 177; NL, Dec. 3, 1923, May 9, 1927.

protect American missionaries and property. He expressed reservations about the US having missionaries in China in the first place because he questioned the right of a nation "attempting to impose its religion on a civilization vastly older and which had its own religion." He preferred the "service" missionaries who sought to win converts through deeds more than through sermons. Yet no missionaries or businessmen had any right to expect protection from the US government when they had fair warning of the dangers involved in remaining in China. In 1928 Freeman gave his prescription for a liberal policy toward China:

America must abstain from all interference in China's internal affairs; she must use all her moral and financial influence for the 'open door' of equal opportunity and equal rights for all foreigners; she must not assume to give armed protection to her nationals outside concession cities; she must be willing to accord China the right that other nations possess of determining what tariffs shall be imposed on imports and in what manner; and she must surrender all special privileges for the consular courts, and the whole arrogance of extraterritoriality, just as soon as justice can be assured before Chinese tribunal. This is the right policy, and because it is right it will be advantageous. China never forgets.<sup>14</sup>

Freeman's views on America's China policy also took into account the strength of Japan. By 1929 he even thought that the cause of world peace might be advanced if Japan took control of Manchuria, a region that had been in dispute

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<sup>14</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, March 7, April 4, 1927, DSFP-LC, Box 176; NL, April 4, 1927, Aug. 7, 1928.

for many years. A decade earlier he had described Japan as "the England of the Orient" and maintained that denying the Japanese colonial expansion "would be to take no warning from the lessons of a thousand years of British history." Throughout the Twenties Freeman's editorial references to Japan were generally favorable. On the other hand, he condemned American "Jingoes" who sought "by as pernicious a propaganda as ever disgraced America" to arouse antagonism with Japan. Though a proponent of immigration restriction, he considered the exclusion of Japanese immigrants under the Immigration Bill of 1924 to be a needless and dangerous affront to the proud Japanese. He correctly pointed out that Japanese immigration would be negligible even if the Japanese were allotted the same quota as other nationals. "Why risk a war for prejudice?" he asked in urging President Coolidge to veto the bill. When Coolidge reluctantly signed the bill into law, Freeman seemed certain that the resentment it aroused in Japan would lead ultimately to armed conflict with the United States. "There is no greater sin than to transmit such a legacy of hate," he wrote.<sup>17</sup>

Freeman also saw no room for hate in America's postwar relations with Germany. Just as his father had championed sectional reconciliation after the Civil War, Douglas urged reconciliation between the United States and her defeated

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<sup>17</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Nov. 25, 1929, DSFP-LC, Box 176; NL, May 1, 1919, Dec. 11, 1920, April 14, 15, 16, 21, 29, May 7, 8, 13, 26, 27, 1924.

European enemy. As in his views on Asia, he mixed idealism with pragmatism. He agreed with John Maynard Keynes that the literal execution of the Treaty of Versailles meant ruin for all Europe and urged the United States and Great Britain to reduce their claims against France so that France could reduce her "impossible" claims against Germany. He regarded October 16, 1925, the date of the signing of the Locarno Pact, as "the world's greatest day since Nov. 11, 1918" because the treaty restored Germany to "equality of relations in the family of nations" while providing assurances for France. He greatly admired Gustav Stresemann, who had negotiated for Germany at Locarno. Only Talleyrand approached the German foreign minister in his skill at bringing a defeated country so quickly back to its old place in the family of nations, and even Talleyrand's record was not comparable "because the French relied on duplicity and maneuver, whereas Stresemann has shaped everything by one high purpose, that of convincing Europe of his honest purpose to keep the peace." In short, Freeman welcomed Germany's return to the family of nations because leaving "63 million of the smartest, [most] physically fit . . . people of Europe out of international affairs is utterly foolish."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman saw the greatest threat to European peace in

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Sept. 18, 1923, April 9, 1924, Oct. 17, 1925, Aug. 16, 1928; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, June 25, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 178.

the 1920s coming out of Fascist Italy, which he thought "had simply gone crazy." In 1926 Douglas and Inez made a tour of Europe, and the 40-year-old editor was appalled at the rampant militarism he observed in Benito Mussolini's Italy. He found an American counterpart to the Fascists in the Ku Klux Klan. Though he conceded that Fascist rule had so far benefitted the country economically and that the people appeared to be happy, he feared that Italian Fascism boded ill for world peace. "There is much in the state of mind of Young Italy today that suggests the Germany of 1906 and thereabouts," he commented. "The outcome may be the same."<sup>19</sup>

Freeman's views on Bolshevik Russia provide perhaps the best example of his "middle-of-the-road liberalism" with respect to foreign affairs of the Twenties. He did not demand the removal of Allied forces from Russia in 1919, but he questioned the wisdom of Allied intervention in the Russian Revolution and noted the unsavory character of some of the anti-Bolshevik leaders whom the Allies were supporting. "Russia could not be conquered except by a mighty army; that army the western nations will not raise; if conquered Russia might return to an autocracy worse than Bolshevism," he asserted. Russia, he concluded, "must

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1926, DSFP-LC, Box 176; DSF, "Confidential Notes on Political and Fiscal Conditions in Great Britain, France and Italy," typed MS, DSFP-LC, Box 6, pp. 14-15.

be left to work out her own salvation." Yet he did not support the severing of relations between the United States and Russia, and he urged American humanitarian aid during the Russian famine of 1921. Opposition to the Bolsheviks "ought not to postulate a policy of nonintercourse when no other policy holds out the slightest promise of relief," he wrote. He declared that Lenin deserved "to be reckoned among the blindest of leaders, guilty of every blunder a man could make" and compared him with Phillip II of Spain. "But what has that to do for the moment with the fact that millions are starving?" he asked. "'If thine enemy hunger, feed him' -- so reads the apostolic injunction, and so America's duty is shaped." Freeman never approved of the Russian communist regime or its practices. Indeed, he took no small delight in the disillusionment of radicals such as Bertrand Russell and Emma Goldman who journeyed to Russia expecting to find the communist ideal at work. "Here was Utopia -- Russia," he wrote sarcastically after Goldman's return to the West. "Here was communism's paradise. Here capital was bound and gagged. Here the downtrodden had a fair deal. Yet Emma Goldman quits this Elysian field moaning under her burden of sympathy for the 'oppressed masses.'" However, Freeman continued to give indications throughout the 1920s that he favored the restoration

of relations between the United States and Russia.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the postwar "Red Scare" in the US, Freeman had little fear that Americans would embrace either socialism or more radical Russian communism. He cited "the ghastly experience of Russia" and "the memory of the wretched federal operation of railways" during the Great War as reasons why socialism had little appeal to Americans. Still, radicalism could spread if government became too conservative. "Justice and liberalism, now as always, are the sure preventives of radicalism," he asserted. The Republican party of the 1920s, he felt, offered neither.<sup>21</sup>

Freeman regarded the Republicans' high tariff policies as the chief economic injustice of the Twenties. He employed some of his strongest language in denouncing the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922. "It is the worst tariff ever imposed by men who are supposed to represent all the people, and not merely New England manufacturers and the wool, steel and sugar interests.... To see the dominant party so selfishly serving a few greedy interests and so ruinously ignoring economic fundamentals is to tremble for the future of America," he declared on August 19. When the bill was finally passed into law a month later, he was still seething with indignation: "For economic cruelty and

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<sup>20</sup>NL, Feb. 7, 1919, Aug. 2, Aug. 11, 1920, Aug. 6, 1921, Nov. 17, Dec. 2, 1924, June 14, 1927; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 370-1.

<sup>21</sup>NL, Oct. 15, 1919, March 22, 1920.



blind political stupidity it stands unrivalled."<sup>22</sup>

The scandals of Harding's administration also drew the editor's ire. The Harding regime's "attitude of mind" was one dominated by the concept of a "holy alliance between big business and government." The Teapot Dome scandal would not have been possible under the Wilson administration because of that administration's liberal state of mind. The contrast between the champion of the New Freedom and the Republican champions of "normalcy" must have appeared all the greater when Wilson died at the height of the Congressional investigation of the oil scandal. Wilson, he said, "had the viewpoint and the traditions, even as he had the blood of Scotch Calvinists who had mocked death and persecution for conscience sake. . . . There can be, then, no silence as he passes, for he has kept the faith."<sup>23</sup>

Freeman himself kept faith with liberalism during the presidential campaign of 1924. Indeed, he thought it more important than ever that the Democrats nominate a liberal candidate. He did not see how the Democrats could hope to win in 1924 unless they opposed the stand-pat Republican Coolidge with a liberal nominee. "Democrats can be 'conservative' in the sense that they will avoid extremes of radicalism, but they cannot and should not attempt to be the conservative party in that they will vie with the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Aug. 19, Sept. 19, 1922.

<sup>23</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Feb. 18, 1924, DSFP-LC, Box 177; NL, Feb. 4, 1924.

Republicans in opposing all political change," he affirmed. "Their rightful place is the only possible place for Democrats -- the place of the Liberals in the political array of parties." His brand of liberalism was not one of increasing federal regulation of the economy. In fact, he felt that "government has become so obnoxiously regulatory and is attempting so many activities that special interests will continue to seek advantage -- if not on the naval oil reserves, then under the waterpower act, or through the shipping board, or in Alaska." He did favor legal regulation of campaign contributions in order to limit corrupt influence on government as much as possible. Most important of all was the choice of cabinet officers. "The Republican custom of including in the cabinet two or three of the men who get the money and 'put' the election 'across' must be stopped," Freeman wrote, "for this is in every way obnoxious and dangerous."<sup>24</sup>

The best way to ensure the right type of cabinet, of course, was to choose the right type of candidate, but beyond insisting that he must be a liberal, the News Leader expressed no preference. The paper was no more favorably inclined toward William G. McAdoo than it had been in 1920 but had praise for both of the other leading Democratic contenders, Alfred E. Smith and John W. Davis. Smith, "the wonder boy of politics," was "a born administrator" with

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Dec. 18, Dec. 19, 1923, April 8, 1924.

sense, courage and charm. Davis was "a brilliant possibility" because of his "wealth of experience" as a Congressman, Solicitor-General and Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Unfortunately, he also bore the political burden of being counsel for J. P. Morgan & Co. and the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. Smith, of course, was handicapped politically by his Roman Catholicism. Freeman noted that it was useless to disguise the fact that political wisdom held that no Catholic could win the presidency. "If anybody could disprove this," he contended, "it would be Al Smith." When Davis finally secured the nomination on the 103rd ballot, Freeman swallowed the West Virginian's big business connections and endorsed him enthusiastically. Besides his proven abilities as a lawyer and a statesman, Davis was "a step-son of the Old Dominion" and a graduate of Washington and Lee University School of Law. "Will Davis show himself a liberal?" Freeman inquired. "The News Leader does not doubt that he will."<sup>25</sup>

At least Davis had to be preferable to the alternatives. The incumbent President Coolidge was "a weak man" of narrow mind, taciturn manner and secretive temperament who had "permitted his administration and his campaign to come under the domination of men and forces that do not work in the light." He had not repudiated the grafters of the Harding administration "and seemed to regard

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Jan. 28, April 11, July 10, 1924.

the plundering of perhaps \$100,000,000 of the natural resources as simply a matter for the police." The regime that Coolidge sought to continue in office was "comparable only to that of Buchanan, Johnson or Grant in its impotence and ineptitude." Coolidge and his party, if returned to power, would, Freeman predicted, "cure nothing but the delusions of those who trust in them." The "radical" Republican insurgent Robert M. La Follette would be even worse. "He revealed his essential weakness of temperament when he affirmed his belief that this country entered the war at the instance of J. P. Morgan & Co., who stood to lose the sum by which the allied powers had overdrawn their credit," Freeman wrote. "Add to nonsense of this sort La Follette's record during the war and his foolish scheme of government ownership of railroads and he becomes an impossible candidate."<sup>24</sup>

Freeman sought to illustrate the differences between the three candidates by describing how each would go about building a house on a rocky site. Coolidge, who believed "that law-making and law-enforcement should be left to find the low level of the least resistance . . . would not think of removing stones, but would adjust the floor-plan to the unevenness of the ground." La Follette, who seemed to think "that man was made for laws, not laws for man . . . would not run a line until he had removed all of [the stones] and

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Nov. 1, Nov. 3, 1924.

then he would refuse to put them in the foundations."

Davis, whose "point of view is that of executive leadership . . . would not remove all the rocks, nor would he cramp his comfort rather than rid himself of them. He would straighten his walls with those he had to lift out of his way."<sup>27</sup>

When the American people chose the builder who would adjust his floor-plan to the unevenness of the ground and elected Calvin Coolidge by a large majority, Freeman was again disappointed but not disheartened. "A great majority of the American people endorsed the Republicans, not for making promises, but for refraining from them," he analyzed. "The country apparently wants neither great men nor great reforms. It wants to be left alone." The only way for Democrats to regain power, otherwise than through a major rift in Republican ranks, "must be through the emergence of a great man or a magnetizing issue." The editor remained optimistic that the man would come again, "as Cleveland came and Wilson," and that the issue would be found "if, as radicals wreck themselves and reactionaries become overbearing, Democrats keep the faith of equal rights and honest liberalism." Freeman's own prescription for the ills of the Democratic party involved a union of the liberal Democrats of the South with those of the West. He had long urged cooperation between liberals of the two regions and

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Sept. 2, 1924.

believed that they both advocated the same ends, with the chief distinction being that Western liberals sought reform through a combination of state and federal action while liberal Southern Democrats generally preferred to work primarily through the state governments.<sup>20</sup>

Freeman himself was willing to compromise a little in order to promote the national interests of the Democratic party, but he left little doubt that he preferred state to federal action. Indeed, he often urged action at the state level in order to make federal action unnecessary. Yet political realities in his own state often made change difficult. In leading the News Leader's campaigns for reform in Virginia, Freeman needed to marshal all of his faith in liberal Democracy, in the ideals of the Old Dominion and in the power of tactful persuasion.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Nov. 5, Dec. 17, 1924.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN INDEPENDENT AND THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT

Most discussions of Virginia politics in the 20th century center around the state's Democratic "machine," or as Douglas Freeman came to call it, the "invisible government." Machine politics is no stranger in most states, but the resiliency and traditionalist nature of Virginia's Democratic organization led political scientist V. O. Key, Jr. to describe the Old Dominion at mid-century as "a political museum piece." The invisible government had its origin in the efforts of Virginia's Conservative-Democrats to wrest control of the state from the Readjuster-Republican organization controlled by William Mahone, the same Mahone whose men had made the celebrated charge at the Battle of the Crater. The Readjuster party, whose name derived from its desire to adjust the state debt downward, formed in 1879 and immediately won control of the General Assembly, which elected Mahone to the United States Senate later that year. In 1881 the Readjusters captured the governorship with the help of Republicans and blacks. Desperate for new leadership, the Conservatives held a convention in Lynchburg in 1883, reorganized as the new Democratic party, and chose businessman and railroad executive John Strode Barbour as the new party's chairman. The efficient Barbour organized every district, county and

precinct in the state. Running against "Mahoneism" and "Africanism," the Democrats regained control of the General Assembly in 1883 and the governorship two years later. Democrat John Warwick Daniel ousted Mahone from the US Senate in 1885, and Barbour, the architect of the Democratic resurgence, was sent to that body by a now overwhelmingly Democratic General Assembly in 1887. According to Virginia historian Allen Wesley Moger, Barbour had ensured Democratic domination of the state by substituting a political machine, interested in party success and adaptable to changing conditions, for a ruling class that had been interested only in perpetuating itself and its political viewpoint.<sup>1</sup>

As the "boss" of this Democratic machine, Barbour was ably assisted by a middle-aged Scottsville attorney, Thomas Staples Martin. By 1892 a new threat had emerged in the form of the Populist party, but Barbour was no longer there to meet it; he had died on May 14 of that year. Martin, a matchless organizer, entered the field of candidates to succeed Barbour in the Senate. To the genuine surprise of many Virginians, the relatively unknown Martin was chosen

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<sup>1</sup>V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), 19; Jack Temple Kirby, Westmoreland Davis: Virginia Planter-Politician, 1859-1942 (Charlottesville, 1968), 47; Paschal Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin: Committee Statesman," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (July, 1960), 349; Edward Younger and James Tice Moore (eds.), The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville, 1982), 104-5, 113-14; Allen Wesley Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, 1968), 51-70.



over Confederate war hero and former Governor of the Commonwealth Fitzhugh Lee. Although the Populist movement in Virginia was in reality not strong, Martin's close friend and political ally Henry D. Flood nearly lost his seat in the state Senate to a Populist candidate in 1895. Martin and "Hal" Flood responded to this close call by strengthening the party organization at the local level. The Martin machine thus emerged from the Populist challenge, just as the Barbour machine had emerged from the challenge of the Readjuster-Republicans. Some recent historians have refuted the popular notion of an all-powerful Martin machine beating back the challenges of Independent Democrats. Clearly Martin's control of the Democratic organization was not as strong as that of his successor Harry Flood Byrd. Yet from his election to the US Senate in 1893 until his death a quarter-century later, Tom Martin was the dominant figure in Virginia politics.<sup>2</sup>

By the time Douglas became editor of the News Leader in 1915, the Bryan newspapers had established themselves as opponents of the Martin machine. Family patriarch Joseph Bryan was a loyal Democrat during Virginia's era of Reconstruction, Redemption and Readjustment, but he

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 70, 360; Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin," 351; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 117-18; Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, 48; Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, 1968), 51-55, 119; Henry C. Ferrell, Jr., Claude A. Swanson of Virginia: A Political Biography (Lexington, Ky., 1985), 23.

maintained his independence from the Democratic machine. He refused to embrace Populism even when the Virginia Populists joined forces with the Martin machine to support the presidential candidacy of William Jennings Bryan in 1896. There was no blood relation between the two Bryans, nor was there any common ground between them on the issue of free silver. The Virginia Bryan, a sound-money businessman, was appalled by the Democratic convention's adoption of a free silver platform and nomination of the young Nebraskan for the presidency. Joseph Bryan and other Virginia "goldbugs," including Governor Charles T. O'Ferrall and former governors Fitzhugh Lee and William E. Cameron, held their own convention in Richmond in August of 1896 and adopted a platform that praised Jeffersonian Democracy, the gold standard and the sound money views of President Grover Cleveland. Despite the vigorous support of Joseph Bryan's newspaper for the gold Democratic ticket of John M. Palmer and Simon B. Buckner, W. J. Bryan carried Virginia by almost a 20,000-vote margin over Republican William McKinley, the national winner. The Palmer-Buckner ticket received only 2,129 votes in the Old Dominion. The Martin machine never forgave the Virginia goldbugs for their apostasy. Governor O'Ferrall was rendered a lame duck and never again held elected office. Joseph Bryan ran for a seat in the Virginia constitutional convention of 1901 but was defeated in a close contest. Neither he nor his son and successor John

Stewart Bryan ever sought public office again.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the Bryans, father and son, continued to use their editorial columns to further the cause of Virginia's Independent Democrats. Though denied a seat in the constitutional convention, Joseph Bryan applauded the new constitution's provisions for disfranchising nearly all of the state's black voters. As a champion of the progressive cause of honesty and efficiency in government, Bryan believed that black disfranchisement was the only way to avoid fraudulent campaign practices. "I had rather see the Democrats take shotguns and drive the Negroes from the polls than to see our young men taught to cheat," he said. "If they once learn that lesson they will not stop at cheating Negroes." Many whites were also disfranchised by the voting requirements of the new constitution, but Bryan did not consider this too high a price to pay for honest government. He also joined in the progressives' call for the direct primary method of nominating candidates for statewide offices, including, as a challenge to Martin, the office of US Senator. Yet Bryan, in the words of Douglas Freeman, "supported the primary not as a panacea but as a lenitive." He was more ardent in his support of the campaign for increased public education in Virginia. These and other

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<sup>2</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 214-15; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 143-44; Moger, Virginia, 157-65; John Stewart Bryan, Joseph Bryan: His Times, His Family, His Friends (Richmond, 1935), 209; DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 166-67.

progressive reforms were achieved during the administration of Governor Andrew Jackson Montague, who took office in 1902. The election of Montague showed that the Martin machine was not so powerful that it could not be made to accept an independent candidate if that candidate could be made to appear attractive to a majority of the state's Democrats. Joseph Bryan thus saw his chief task as an independent Democratic editor to be one of publicizing independent candidates and programs and prodding the machine to accept them as its own. This realistic approach to Virginia's one-party politics was adopted by Bryan's son Stewart and later by Freeman.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Bryan died in 1908. Stewart Bryan succeeded his father as publisher of the Times-Dispatch and the News Leader. The opening shots in his first editorial campaign were fired by young Douglas Freeman, whom he had hired to write a series of articles on tax reform for the Times-Dispatch. The governor, Claude Augustus Swanson, was a machine man, but he was, in Freeman's words, "always quick to sense political trends." Bryan thus felt that the time was ripe for a campaign to equalize property tax assessments, which varied greatly across the Old Dominion. A few weeks after Freeman's editorials began to appear, other Virginia newspapers took up the cause of equal

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<sup>4</sup>John Stewart Bryan, Joseph Bryan, 250; DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 169; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 216-17.

taxation. Governor Swanson responded by proposing the establishment of a legislative commission to investigate the question of tax reform. Another influential machine man, Richard Evelyn Byrd, supported the call for reform and became a member of the commission, of which Freeman, it will be remembered, served as secretary. The General Assembly rejected the commission's recommendations when the issue was debated in 1912. Virginia would have to wait for tax reform. Yet the willingness of such important machine leaders as Swanson and Byrd to support reform shows both the flexibility that enabled the Democratic organization to endure and the possibilities of Bryan's methods of persuasion.<sup>5</sup>

Stewart Bryan's attitude toward the machine crystallized between 1909 and 1911, while Freeman was working for the State Tax Commission. In the gubernatorial race of 1909, the machine supported Judge William H. Mann of Nottoway County. Bryan threw his editorial influence behind his cousin, Henry St. George Tucker. Harry Tucker had fallen out of favor with the machine in 1896, when, like his kinsman Joseph Bryan, he refused to embrace free silver. His heresy had cost him his seat in Congress. In the Democratic gubernatorial primary of 1909, which was now tantamount to election, Mann defeated Tucker by 5,000 votes. The campaign was generally dull and uninspiring except for

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 218-19; DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 224-29.

the issue of prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Tucker opposed statewide prohibition, favoring local option instead. Mann was a leader of Virginia's Anti-Saloon League, but many of his machine supporters were "wet." The campaign drew to a close amid accusations of a "deal" between the Martin machine and the Reverend James Cannon, the leader of the fight for prohibition in Virginia. Although no such charges were ever substantiated, the contest fanned the flames of opposition to the machine.<sup>4</sup>

The death of Senator John Warwick Daniel in 1910 created a unique opportunity for an independent challenge to the machine and created a dilemma for Stewart Bryan. Former governor Swanson was appointed to fill Daniel's seat but in 1911 faced a primary for a term of his own. Senator Martin was also up for re-election that year. Independent Congressman Carter Glass of Lynchburg decided to run against Swanson, while another anti-machine Congressman, William Atkinson Jones, challenged Martin. Bryan did not admire Swanson, but he acknowledged that Swanson had sponsored or endorsed much admirable legislation during his term as governor. Though he often disapproved of Martin's methods, Bryan, in Freeman's words, "had been of one mind with Richmond businessmen in thinking that Martin's diligent

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 237-38; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 188-89; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 158-60; Moger, Virginia, 215-18; Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin," 355; Virginus Dabney, Dry Messiah: The Life of Bishop Cannon (New York, 1949), 54-56.

attention to duty was a credit item not to be disregarded." When Jones charged that Martin had used his position to lobby actively on behalf of railroad interests, Bryan challenged the Congressman to prove his accusations. Jones responded with the publication of the Barbour Thompson letters, a series of correspondence between Martin and J. S. Barbour Thompson, an important Virginia railroad official. These letters, exchanged in 1891, furnished proof beyond a reasonable doubt that Martin had received railroad money. Faced with this evidence, Martin admitted taking money from railroad interests but denied using it for personal gain. He also denied being a railroad lobbyist. The railroad funds, he contended, had been used to establish and maintain Democratic hegemony over a state threatened by Negro domination. Stewart Bryan held to the progressive belief in honest, efficient government, but he was no radical. He accepted Martin's explanation of his railroad connections as necessary for the maintenance of good order in Virginia and refrained from making formal endorsements in his newspaper. Then Carter Glass made a direct personal appeal to Bryan. Glass admitted that he had little hope of winning but felt that he had to try because the good of the commonwealth depended upon breaking the political and financial control of the machine. The Congressman was persuasive, for Bryan responded with a News Leader editorial declaring that if "a ruthless, selfish, corrupt and

extravagant ring is in power, that ring must be broken, and the best way to break it is to defeat its leaders." The News Leader, personally edited by Bryan, immediately endorsed Glass and Jones, though the Bryan-controlled Times-Dispatch did not do so until its reluctant editor, J. C. Hemphill, left for a vacation on the eve of the election. Although Glass and Jones went down to defeat, the Senate contest of 1911 more firmly established the Bryan newspapers as opponents of the machine.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the nature of Virginia society and politics served to restrain this opposition. Perhaps the greatest constraint on hard-hitting opposition to the machine was Virginia's code of manners. As Freeman described the Old Dominion's gentlemanly code of conduct: "The average Virginian displays an inherited thoughtfulness for the sensibilities of another. He dislikes to say unpleasant things or touch a sore spot, and he is equally anxious not to have his own bruises handled or his own feelings hurt." The code placed restrictions on the organization itself. The machine that controlled Virginia politics was remarkably free of venality and demagoguery, of personal attacks on its opponents. But the code also imposed restrictions on the opposition. Freeman summarized the operation of the gentleman's code in Virginia politics:

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<sup>7</sup>DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 237-44; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 164-66; Moger, Virginia, 221-28; NL, Aug. 2, 1911; Ferrell, Claude A. Swanson, 97.



Personalities in campaigns are banned by unwritten law. Consideration shows itself in a sharp reaction to the side of a man who is too vigorously assailed, either by his opponents or by the newspapers. . . . It is all a political curiosity -- a people too considerate of office-holders to overcome the phalanx office-holders are careful to muster.

Thus, the aggressive Journalistic crusade that might result in political change in most states could often produce a groundswell of sympathy for the machine in the Old Dominion.<sup>2</sup>

Stewart Bryan learned this lesson in 1913, when the Times-Dispatch launched an attack on the practice of compensating county officials through fees for performance of specific duties rather than through fixed salaries. The paper regarded the fee system as the key to machine control and employed strong language in denouncing it. After an attack on Congressional lobbying, the Times-Dispatch asserted that there existed in Virginia a unique officeholders' lobby, "better known as the Plunderbund." This lobby was "a combination in the interest of authorized theft and legalized graft." The paper concluded that to a great degree, "the General Assembly of Virginia is the tool of the Plunderbund." Such intemperate language provoked outrage on the part of machine politicians and many

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<sup>2</sup>DSF, "Virginia: A Gentle Dominion," Nation (July 16, 1924) 69, 71; Key, Southern Politics, 19; Marshall William Fishwick, Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion (New York, 1959), 252.

newspapers. The Times-Dispatch was lashed by a storm of criticism that lasted nearly four months. When the storm finally began to abate, Mr. Bryan candidly confessed in the edition of October 7, 1913 that the Plunderbund editorial had been "couched in language that was unnecessarily harsh, offensive and severe."<sup>9</sup>

Even within the limits imposed by Virginia's code of manners, the machine might have been successfully challenged had there existed an effective organized opposition. Occasionally, as in the case of Andrew Jackson Montague in 1901, the machine could be made to accept an independent candidate. On other occasions, a machine governor such as Claude Swanson might be convinced of the political wisdom of championing certain independent causes. Yet the Independents could never mount a sustained challenge to the machine. The Republican party stood discredited in the eyes of most white Virginians because of its associations with Reconstruction, "Negro rule" and Mahoneism. After the Constitution of 1902 disfranchised nearly all black voters, the Virginia GOP was emasculated.<sup>10</sup>

The realities of social and political life in Virginia combined with Douglas Freeman's temperament and his personal political views to make the News Leader during the years of

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<sup>9</sup>DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 251-53; Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 8, Oct. 7, 1913.

<sup>10</sup>Moger, Virginia, 193-94; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 240-41.

his editorship a frequent but cautious critic of Virginia's invisible government. Freeman's deference to John Stewart Bryan has been noted, but the young editor had little difficulty adapting his political views to those of his publisher because their views were essentially the same. Both men desired a government of honesty and efficiency that would promote private business as a means of increasing community wealth. That government should do all in its power to ensure equal opportunity for all. Support for public education thus became a major theme of News Leader editorial policy. Yet government spending for education and other programs to provide equality of opportunity should not defeat its own purpose by placing a heavy burden of debt on succeeding generations. Radical movements found no favor with Freeman or Bryan because neither questioned the American capitalist economic system. The News Leader recognized the need for organized labor but never endorsed radicalism within the labor movement. Editorializing upon the death of Samuel Gompers, Freeman declared that American labor had gained more under the conservative leadership of Gompers than it could have gained in any other way, under any other of its contemporary leaders. Similarly, Freeman and Bryan favored only limited governmental intervention in the economy. When such intervention was necessary to ensure equal opportunity, they preferred that it be at the state level. As noted earlier, the News Leader frequently

urged action by the state government in order to make federal action unnecessary. Throughout his editorial career, and especially during the early years, Freeman's writings on contemporary Virginia were a call upon the state's invisible government to work to improve the quality of life for all its citizens, but the call was softened by the Old Dominion's code of manners, by the realities of its one-party political system and by Freeman's own temperament and political views.<sup>11</sup>

The gubernatorial contest of 1917 was the first major state political contest in which Freeman was involved as editor of the News Leader. The campaign revolved around the issue of prohibition, even though Virginia had already adopted statewide prohibition. It became an issue because of the entrance into the race of Westmoreland Davis, a wealthy planter and attorney from Leesburg. Davis was a total abstainer, but he favored local option over statewide prohibition. Moreover, he was an Independent Democrat. The machine candidate was J. Taylor Ellyson, a veteran of both the Confederate army and of Virginia's political wars and a man known to enjoy more than an occasional glass, even though as lieutenant governor he had cast the deciding vote in favor of statewide prohibition. The irony thus presented itself of a personal "dry" appearing as a "wet" candidate and a personal "wet" running as a "dry." Complicating

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 214, 228-29, 384; NL, Dec. 13, 1924.

matters was the presence of a third candidate, Attorney General John Garland Pollard, another "dry" who had the support of most of the state's independents. The News Leader endorsed none of the three but showed friendship toward Pollard when it allowed him to use its pages to vent his ire against prohibitionist leader James Cannon, Jr. Reverend Cannon, fearing that a split of the "dry" vote between Ellyson and Pollard would allow Davis to win, had thrown the considerable weight of his support behind Ellyson. Two days after Pollard used the News Leader to accuse Cannon of violating the nonpartisan rules of the Anti-Saloon League and of harboring personal grudges, Freeman expressed the paper's growing concern over the trend of the campaign. Noting that the News Leader had opposed prohibition in 1915 because it did not believe it could be enforced, the editor declared that the paper now approved prohibition "because we know it is enforceable." But, Freeman wondered, "is it either necessary or honorable to assail the honesty of Mr. Davis, to discredit Mr. Pollard, to pose in holiness or draw again the lines of a finished fight" in order to promote the candidacy of one man? At the end of July, the News Leader still expressed no preference among the three contenders, but by election eve, Freeman had become so disgusted by the tactics of the machine and its Anti-Saloon League allies that he definitely eliminated Ellyson as a favorable choice. He lamented the

fact that neither tax reform, reform of the state's budget system nor good roads had been the chief issue of the campaign. Nor was prohibition and its strict enforcement the issue. The law was on the books, and all three candidates, including Davis, were pledged to enforce it. No, the issue, as stated by Freeman, was this: "WILL VIRGINIA PERMIT A COMBINATION BETWEEN THE DISCREDITED STATE MACHINE AND A FEW LEADERS OF THE ANTI-SALOON LEAGUE TO REVIVE A SETTLED QUESTION AND, IN THE INTERESTS OF ONE CANDIDATE, TO PROSCRIBE ALL WHO DARE OPPOSE HIM OR RAISE A VOICE IN BEHALF OF FAIR PLAY?" He still declined to endorse either Davis or Pollard but urged his readers to "vote for the one of these two men you believe has the strongest following to defeat this combination -- the one who, enforcing the law, will fight political proscription to the bitter end."<sup>12</sup>

Just as Cannon feared, Ellyson and Pollard split the "dry" vote, thus opening the door for a Davis victory. In reviewing the outcome of the campaign, Freeman expressed satisfaction that Virginia had voted against proscription, not against prohibition, and had shown "all her ancient resentment of boss rule, whether paraded with all the specious illogic of job-hunting politicians or masked behind the misused cowl of the church." The Independent

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<sup>12</sup>Moger, Virginia, 313-16; Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, 61-70; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 215, 250; NL, July 26, July 28, July 31, Aug. 6, 1917.

administration of Governor Davis stressed economy and efficiency in government and saw through the passage of several reforms that won enthusiastic support from Freeman. Among these were the inauguration of the executive budget system and the workmen's compensation system and the streamlining of the state highway department and state penitentiary.<sup>12</sup>

In 1921 Henry Tucker sought to give Virginia a second consecutive term of independent leadership in the governor's mansion. Stewart Bryan again supported "Cousin Harry," and Freeman used the editorial pages of the News Leader to endorse Tucker's candidacy. As he so often did, Freeman based his appeal for a better future for Virginia on a recollection of the Old Dominion's past glories. "The News Leader often has thought that if one of those great men of Virginia's golden ages could come back and could face the problems of the twentieth century, he would be much like Mr. Tucker," he wrote on the eve of the Democratic primary. "He would not be a reactionary. . . . But if the men who made the destiny of Virginia in other days might look into the darkness of the future, they would focus upon it the light of the past. That is what Mr. Tucker has done." The machine was without a definite leader following the death of Senator Martin in 1919. Senator Claude Swanson and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., Aug. 8, 1917; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 174; Moger, Virginia, 320-23; Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, 77-104.

Representative Hal Flood were the most influential organization men, but neither wished to give up a Congressional office to run for governor. Elbert Lee Trinkle, a 44-year-old Wytheville lawyer, emerged as the machine candidate. Trinkle took no firm positions on any issue but portrayed himself as a progressive businessman who would run the commonwealth like a well-managed corporation. Tucker, like Freeman and Bryan, urged reform at the state level in order to prevent the usurpation of state power by the federal government. After a dull campaign that eventually became a partisan assault on Tucker's record of opposition to free silver, prohibition and female suffrage, Trinkle won the primary by a majority of over 22,000 votes.<sup>14</sup>

Yet for the first time in many years, the Republicans mounted a serious campaign for the governorship. The Republican nominee was Colonel Henry Watkins Anderson of Dinwiddie County, a successful corporate attorney. The GOP platform, calling for a businesslike administration, improved public education and better roads, appealed to both Bryan and Freeman. Bryan was so enthused that he considered editorial support of Anderson's candidacy. Freeman was more realistic. Writing to Bryan, who was vacationing in New

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<sup>14</sup>DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 351-52; NL, Aug. 1, 1921; Moger, Virginia, 327-28; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 224-26; Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, 153-54; Ferrell, Claude A. Swanson, 133-35.



Hampshire, he expressed his agreement with Anderson's demand for reapportionment of the state legislature, for "Richmond and Virginia need nothing so much as they need intelligent tax reform; that never can be had until there is a reapportionment of representation." He would continue to encourage the Republicans in this, as well as in their call for other reforms, because "God knows we need a better and a loftier spirit than that now displayed by the men who control the Democratic machine." Yet he considered an outright endorsement of Anderson unwise. "I cannot be persuaded that the time yet has come when we can afford to be independent in name as we are independent in fact," he told Mr. Bryan. Moreover, he did not support Anderson's call for constitutional revisions that would liberalize the franchise. "I must say I do not favor any revision of the constitution as respects the electoral franchise, for it seems to me we ought to raise the electorate to the franchise rather than lower the franchise to the electorate," he maintained. "If we do the latter we render still more unintelligent our electorate; if we pursue the former course, we have the electorate fit to vote when it is qualified to vote."<sup>15</sup>

Freeman's fear of an unintelligent electorate and his reluctance to endorse a Republican candidate stemmed not

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<sup>15</sup>Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 226-27; DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 352-53; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, Sept. 12, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 5.

only from his perception of current political realities but also from historical consciousness. Like Walker Freeman, Douglas bore no ill will toward the North, but both father and son found it difficult to forgive the Republican party for the excesses of Reconstruction. A 1916 campaign editorial reveals the depth of the younger Freeman's feeling against the GOP:

[The country] knows that during the forty-seven years and more of power of their party since the close of the war between the states the Republicans, in 1876, stole the presidency, and in 1880 bought it with their 'blocks of five.' It knows that they forced upon the South the reconstruction additions to the constitution in violation of that instrument; it knows that they turned loose upon the South an army of alien cormorants to prey upon what little substance was left us from the wreck of the war. It knows that they made parts of the South political and social infernos, and that in malice and envy they aimed to uproot and destroy the very foundations of Southern civilization.

The country also knows that they, the Republicans, while in power retarded Southern industrial recuperation and development for nearly a generation; it knows that they bound the nation to a juggernaut of robber protection, which in the service of the trusts, was crushing out competition and fattening the few -- gorging special interest -- at the expense of the many, and it knows that they fostered and perpetuated a banking and currency system that entrenched a currency monopoly.

All this the country knows; and it knows, moreover, that in the less than twelve years of Democratic power [since the Civil War] the two latter evils have been extirpated, and practically all the progress since the close of the war in recovery from the effects of the

previous ones, has been made.<sup>14</sup>

Realizing that most Virginians shared Freeman's sentiments, Anderson tried to distance himself from the Republican party of the 19th century. The state GOP convention excluded virtually all Negro delegates and pledged to admit no blacks to its party councils or to public office. Yet Anderson continued to call for a repeal of the poll tax and further extension of the suffrage. Freeman was somewhat amused at the Republican predicament but warned: "Republican control of Virginia, no matter under what guise it is sought, means the re-enfranchisement of those who were taken out of politics in 1902. If the Republicans were capable of accomplishing all they promise in other respects, the fulfillment of their pledge to lower the electoral qualifications would bring to Virginia calamity outmatching any possible service." On the day preceding the election, Freeman admitted that Virginia required many improvements. "But if improvements are to be genuine," he asserted, "they must be effected by the party that knows Virginia, has the confidence of Virginia and has served Virginia. . . . The surest and quickest way of finishing the task before Virginia is, first, to recognize that Virginia must and will remain Democratic, and secondly, within the party to stand shoulder to shoulder with the liberals." He concluded that a vote for Anderson

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<sup>14</sup>NL, Oct. 14, 1916.

would weaken liberalism rather than strengthen it. Trinkle, capitalizing on white Virginia's fears of a return to "Negro rule" under the Republicans, crushed Anderson by winning 65% of the vote, but not before the Republican campaign had forced him to pledge reapportionment of the seats in the state legislature. Freeman expressed satisfaction with the outcome, but years later he credited Anderson with effecting a turning point in the political history of Virginia. "To you," he told the Colonel, "primarily and almost exclusively, was due the destruction of the 'rotten boroughs' of Virginia and the reapportionment of legislative representation."<sup>7</sup>

Freeman soon found himself at odds with the new governor. Despite the News Leader's support during the general election campaign, Trinkle never forgave the paper for having endorsed Tucker during the primary contest and proved to be hypersensitive to newspaper criticism. Freeman later wrote that Governor Trinkle, though "an amiable man at heart," became obsessed with the idea that Virginia newspapers were so destructive in their criticism that they were hampering the state's progress. He recounted an incident in which Trinkle used the occasion of a welcoming address to a national convention to deliver "a tirade of more than an hour against 'the press.'" During the final

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<sup>7</sup>Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 227; Moger, Virginia, 329-30; NL, Sept. 9, Nov. 7, 1921; DSF to Henry Watkins Anderson, July 2, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 95.

year of his administration, Trinkle wrote a personal letter to Freeman in which he expressed his regret "that there is so little I can apparently do . . . that meets with the approval of your paper," requested better cooperation and concluded that "If your paper would be just as fair to me as I have tried to be to your paper, I am sure there would be very few differences between us."<sup>10</sup>

Although Trinkle's tone was perhaps unnecessarily defensive, there is little doubt that the News Leader was a thorn in his side. At no time in his long career as editor was Freeman more incessant in his calls for reform in the Old Dominion. In keeping with his belief that a good government should provide equality of opportunity for all its citizens, he placed particular emphasis on improved roads and better education. He considered good roads so important that he even favored the state government going into debt by financing them through a bond issue. In 1923 he exhorted Trinkle and the legislature to overcome their "bondphobia" and authorize an issue of at least \$12,000,000 for road construction. "If there be any financial risk," he wrote, "it is worth taking -- for Virginia." He conceded that if Virginians were content to build better roads at a slow pace it could be accomplished without contracting any debt, "but while Virginia may be saving interest, nearby

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<sup>10</sup>DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 352, 368; Elbert Lee Trinkle to DSF, Jan. 10, 1925, DSFP-LC, Box 8.

states will be making millions through the veritable regeneration of their agriculture." Again, the appeal was to Virginia's pride: "Ever since 1810, Virginia has been slipping back from her prominent place among the states. Others have been gaining in wealth, in population and in comforts more rapidly than has the Mother of States." Lack of good roads had been a major reason for this relative decline. If this were not so, "why did Virginia recover lost ground during the only period (1840-60) in which she invested heavily in improved highways?" Freeman saw good highway transportation as necessary not only for economic growth but as a means of preserving the distinctive rural life of the ancient commonwealth. Railroads had not sufficed to make the farmer contented, but the "railroad age" was giving way to the "road age," which presented the Old Dominion "her one best opportunity to maintain her civilization by stopping the exodus from the farm and from the state. This, surely, is an ideal worth fighting for."<sup>19</sup>

Improved education was even more crucial for Virginia's welfare. As he often did when he felt the state's future was at stake, Freeman supplemented his editorial commentaries with personal involvement. In 1923 he helped to organize an "alumni council" of administrators and graduates of Virginia's state and private colleges. The Alumni Council served several purposes, not the least of

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<sup>19</sup>NL, Feb. 28, March 1, Aug. 13, Nov. 7, 1923.

which was lobbying the legislature for increased aid to public institutions. Freeman worked to get the presidents of state-supported schools to agree in advance on the appropriations they would urge and on the proper and equitable division of any new money that was received. Such prior agreement among the college heads would "prevent much back-biting and many sly attempts on the part of one to take advantage of another." Once more, Freeman made his usual appeal to pride in Virginia's past. Noting that the Old Dominion ranked first among the Southern states (excluding Texas) in college enrollment but next to last in the percentage of the tax dollar devoted to higher education, he asked his readers if there could be any "clearer proof that Virginia must maintain her standards and enlarge the facilities of the state colleges or else must reconcile herself to losing the primacy that was hers for a century." Other important state issues were involved in the battle for better schools. Freeman cited the fact that North Carolina had moved ahead of Virginia both in highway construction and in higher education because the Tar Heels had financed their road-building program through bonds and could thus devote more than twice as many cents per tax dollar to education than could Virginia. The editor lambasted the philosophy of "pay-as-you-go" road construction as "treason to the future." Such a policy made the "go" uncertain, but Freeman had no doubt that "Virginia will pay -- not merely

In heavier taxes for the attempted construction of the roads from revenue, but in disappointment, in loss of initiative and in education." Perhaps Virginia would even "pay with her chance to take her place once more among the states that hope." The News Leader's old fight for equalization of tax assessments was relevant to the struggle for improved elementary and secondary schools. "The obligation to help the backward county is not an obligation to help the county that will not help itself," argued Freeman. Why should a county that assessed property at only 25% of market value receive the same amount of state funds as a county that assessed at 70%? Freeman's prescription: "Do this -- equalize assessments -- and Virginia will have abundant means to equalize opportunity."<sup>20</sup>

Trinkle proved to be a vacillating governor, and Freeman eventually became so disgusted with Virginia's slow rate of progress that he came as close as he ever did to advocating rebellion against the state's Democratic leadership. In 1924 he wrote a series of editorials in which he endorsed Republican Henry Anderson's call for an expanded electorate. He compared voting statistics for the two decades prior to the adoption of the Constitution of 1902 with those for the period since 1902. The average vote per 1,000 population in Richmond during the 20 years before

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<sup>20</sup>DSF to John Stewart Bryan, Dec. 5, 1923, DSFP-LC, Box 5; NL, July 24, Dec. 5, Dec. 6, 1923.



1902 was 126. Between 1902 and 1920, the average vote was only 44 per 1,000. Even after the adoption of female suffrage, the average vote had been only 79 per 1,000.

"Twenty per cent. of the electorate rules -- 20 per cent. at the maximum. And it is called democracy!" Freeman cried.

"In keeping out the ignorant," he wrote, "the framers of the constitution kept out the indifferent as well. . . . The negroes are eliminated -- yes; but who is prepared to say the result is worth what it has cost?" He pointed out that the black population of Virginia had dropped from 38.4% of the total in 1890 to only 29.9% in 1920. "Negro rule" was thus no longer a threat. Moreover, Virginia Republicans no longer sought the black vote: "The 'lily whites' control and know that the Republicans' chance of growth in the South depends upon avoidance of fellowship with the negro." The editor concluded:

To protect himself from a danger that does not exist, and to disfranchise an element that could be debarred much more easily, Virginia makes too heavy demands on the voter. When the average man and woman fail to meet those demands, they subject Virginia to government by a fragment of her electorate. Yet Virginia wonders why she is leaderless, why she is politically sterile! How can the people fail to see that the starting point of political progress in Virginia is a revision of the constitution to provide simple and more liberal electoral requirements?

Until such revision took place, Virginia's government would continue to be "oligarchy made easy." And as long as the oligarchic machine ruled, progress would be slow. Freeman

was encouraged in his belief that the time was ripe for an assault on the machine by the opinions of the men of the News Leader Current Events Class, which he taught from 1918 until his death. In 1924 the class members, most of whom were bankers or attorneys, resolved that "the machine gang had done Richmond and the State of Virginia more harm than anything since the Civil War."<sup>21</sup>

Yet despite such evidence of support, Freeman continued to be cautious, and by 1926 he had virtually abandoned his campaign for electoral reform. The reason for this apparent retreat was not timidity but rather the emergence of young Harry Flood Byrd as the leader of the state's Democratic organization and his election to the governorship in 1925. Under Byrd, the machine became more powerful than ever, and Freeman continued to editorialize against the invisible government for the rest of his career. But Byrd's policies as governor accomplished much of what the News Leader had advocated for two decades and convinced Freeman that true reform was possible within the confines imposed by machine domination.

The News Leader showed little enthusiasm for Byrd during the Democratic primary campaign of 1925. Indeed, Freeman's exasperation with the machine was still so profound that he hinted at the desirability of a new party

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Nov. 6, Nov. 7, Nov. 8, Nov. 17, Nov. 24, 1924; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Nov. 17, 1924.

made up of independent Democrats and liberal Republicans. "The alternatives of Virginia liberals are to make the Democratic party progressive or else to cut loose from the conservative machine element and, drawing Republican liberals to them, to set up a party that shall be true to the real Democratic tradition of liberalism," he maintained. "In one sense, neither alternative involves departure from the Democratic party, for the truth is that those who have fallen into the rut of conservatism have already abandoned the party, no matter how tenaciously they hold to the name." In short, Freeman declared that Byrd "FINDS THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHERE IT MUST GO FORWARD OR BE SPLIT. . . . Four more years of reaction will mean rebellion." The editor acknowledged Mr. Byrd's youthful vigor, his blood lines and his proven business ability as traits that should make him the leader of Virginia progressives. On the other hand, Byrd had close ties "with those who are holding tenaciously to the political ideals of an age that is dead and done with." The gamble was now whether Byrd "will choose to spend his four years as governor with the vanguard or with the rearguard." On the day Byrd was inaugurated, Freeman again sounded the challenge: "If Mr. Byrd holds to liberalism and develops no temperamental weakness that will tie him down, he probably has before him a leadership rivaling that of Virginia's early history. But if he holds back and casts in his lot with the conservatives, who would

shamble along on the easy road, he will be the lost leader of a decadent cause."<sup>22</sup>

The energetic Governor Byrd set out at once to meet the challenge. He proposed and saw through passage of a tax reform plan whereby state property taxes were abolished. This ended the problem of unequal assessments for state taxation and allowed each locality to tax property at its own rate of assessment and for its own purposes. The new plan also cut taxes on capital used in industry and reduced the tax on bonds, notes and other evidences of debt. Industrial and farm machinery was to be subject to local taxation only. Byrd also saw through an ambitious program of government reorganization that brought economy and efficiency to the state bureaucracy. He began by hiring the New York Bureau of Municipal Research to conduct a survey of Virginia government. He then appointed a committee of prominent citizens to receive the bureau's report and make recommendations. Freeman was one of the members of this committee, which accepted most of the bureau's work and recommended that the plethora of state agencies be combined into 11 major departments. State financial functions were to be centralized in the Department of the Treasury. The number of state officials elected by the voters was reduced from eight to three, with the others being appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The fee system of

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<sup>22</sup>NL, Sept. 21, Sept. 29, Nov. 2, 1925, Feb. 1, 1926.

compensation for local officials was also brought under better control, with a fixed maximum of compensation set by a state compensation board. Most of these changes were achieved without constitutional revision, but some, such as the short ballot, required amendments to the constitution. Byrd was able to secure passage of these amendments without the necessity of calling an expensive constitutional convention.<sup>22</sup>

Improved roads and better schools continued to be major issues during Governor Byrd's administration. Byrd's insistence on a "pay-as-you-go" plan of road construction was one of the few parts of his program that the News Leader opposed. Freeman hoped that the governor could be made to accept a bond issue to finance highway construction, but he eventually abandoned this hope. Near the end of Byrd's term, the editor raised the question of diverting some road funds to improving education. He praised Byrd for supporting increases in funding for both public schools and higher education, but he realized that while these appropriations were impressive in comparison with previous years, they remained inadequate. While the Southern states had been improving their educational systems, other states

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<sup>22</sup>Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., "The Emergence of a Leader: Harry Flood Byrd, Governor of Virginia, 1926-1930," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (July, 1974), 265-78; Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 237-43; Moger, Virginia, 341-44; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 177-80; Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, 164-66; Ferrell, Claude A. Swanson, 143; NL, Jan. 15, 1930.

had not stood still, so that the South still lagged behind the rest of the nation. In Virginia, appropriations for education had been multiplied by three between 1912 and 1927, but outlays for roads had grown almost fifty-fold. Freeman thus posed the question: "How far does the economic interest of the state require that the road program should be pushed at its present rate before there is a more equitable distribution of revenues between highways and schools?" He acknowledged that road revenues came from gasoline taxes and automobile licenses, but when the main state roads had been built, "what reason is there that a great part of the gasoline tax should not be used to equalize educational opportunity in the state?"<sup>24</sup>

Overall, Freeman believed that the Byrd administration had been a great boon to Virginia. He admired Byrd both for his accomplishments and his administrative skills. "He has commanded virtual unanimity for measures that formerly divided the legislature bitterly," Freeman wrote in 1928, "and he has accomplished this by preparing the way carefully through conference, conciliation, compromise and the most brilliant publicity." At the conclusion of Byrd's term, the News Leader listed his many achievements and pronounced them to be "a most astounding record" that had probably never "been excelled in any American state during any one man's administration of four years." Byrd's program had placed

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Oct. 17, 1929.

the Old Dominion "on a foundation as secure as that which any state can envisage." Yet for Freeman, Byrd had a significance beyond any specific accomplishments:

What he has done has been to set a new standard for Virginia and to prove that progress does not mean radicalism. He has shown, at the same time, that new and effective ideas can be introduced and administered by an organization that has, in the past, been charged with being incurably reactionary. If he has not been Virginia's greatest governor since the days of Henry and of Jefferson, The News Leader confesses that it does not know to whom to award that distinction. He has fought a good fight, he has kept the faith....<sup>25</sup>

For more than a dozen years after he became editor of the News Leader, Douglas Freeman had fought a good, if often restrained, fight for progress in his beloved home state. Despite occasional frustrations with the workings of the invisible government, he had kept the faith that his fellow Virginians would adopt his brand of moderate liberalism as the best means of restoring the Old Dominion to her place of greatness among the states while maintaining most of her traditional values. Though he never abandoned his hopes for liberal progress in Virginia, he never again devoted as much of his own time and energy to the cause. Partly this resulted from the expansion of his personal horizons during the last 25 years of his life. Partly it was because he became more conservative in some of his own views, at least within the context of changing times. Yet it was largely

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1928, Jan. 15, 1930.

the result of a severe blow to his faith in the tolerance, intelligence and good will of many of Virginia's citizens. This blow came as a direct result of defeat in a fight that even Harry Byrd could not win -- the struggle to carry Virginia for Democrat Alfred E. Smith in the presidential election of 1928.



CHAPTER VIII  
THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

The campaign of Alfred Emanuel Smith for President of the United States brought to a boil passions that had been simmering for years. Perhaps no issue stirred more passions or caused more resentments than did prohibition. Stewart Bryan "instinctively opposed" prohibition. Like his father Joseph Bryan, "he denied ... that government could or should attempt to deal with the average man's appetite." When Virginia adopted statewide prohibition in 1914, the News Leader voiced its opposition to the measure, but when the issue of a national prohibition amendment arose a few years later, the paper, now edited by Douglas Freeman, was more sympathetic toward the "noble experiment." Writing on January 12, 1918, Freeman declared: "If prohibition will do the nation as much good -- or anything like as much good -- as it has done Virginia, we are for national prohibition." When the 18th Amendment was ratified a year later, he predicted that it would be "an unreckonable blessing to America." It soon became apparent that there were many problems with enforcing prohibition, but Freeman counselled patience. The crux of the problem lay in "the difference between an experimental and a dogmatic state of mind." The proper state of mind was experimental. "Prohibition should be considered the best method yet

devised of combating a known evil," he wrote. "As such it deserves a thorough test under conditions that will show its comparative benefits and disadvantages. If a better method be found, let it be tried, whenever the fair-minded majority may desire." Freeman continued to sound this theme well into the Twenties. "For the sake of every interest, the present experiment honestly should be carried on to success or failure with the support of every self-respecting, law-abiding, country-loving American," he wrote in 1923. "If it be successful, all will benefit. If it fail, palpably and unmistakably, something else may be tried." Yet he was already beginning to wonder if Virginia's original "quart-a-month" prohibition law might not be preferable to absolute prohibition. "Many consider that Virginia never was as little troubled about liquor as when those who wished it could get a quart of whiskey every month," he observed. "'Bootleggers did not flourish; comparatively few people got drunk by the quick consumption of their quart; duplicating orders and impersonating other people never reached the proportions of a scandal; more than anything else, perhaps, the quart-a-month rule operated to mollify those who wanted a little liquor at intervals and mightily would have protested if they had been denied it.'" By 1924 he was forced to confess that all was not well with prohibition but still did not advocate abandoning the experiment. Two years later he cited "the wiping out of the

bar" as a great gain of prohibition but admitted that the experiment had also brought about "the almost universal defiance and disregard of the law." He was glad that public debate on the issue was increasing. "Public opinion of prohibition is 'on the move' in America," he asserted. "It will not halt till it has found some method, fair alike to law and to temperance, of dealing with this ancient foe of the race."<sup>1</sup>

If Freeman welcomed increased public discussion of prohibition, he did not welcome the injection of the prohibition question into partisan politics. His disgust at the machine's use of the issue in the gubernatorial contest of 1917 has been noted. When the Democratic National Convention met in 1920, he warned it not to dogmatize on prohibition. He believed that the party platform "might with propriety avoid all reference to the experiment while it is in progress." But lest silence be construed as evasion, he urged the party to pledge itself to giving prohibition a fair test. "Beyond this," he contended, "it is neither necessary nor wise to go. . . . The Democrats should accept the status quo and should avoid all complicating questions." As with the platform, so with the nominee. Every serious contender for the Democratic nomination was willing to pledge himself to a fair test of

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<sup>1</sup>DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 169-70; NL, Jan. 12, 1918, Jan. 16, 1919, March 29, June 17, 1920, April 12, April 16, 1923, Nov. 28, 1924, Feb. 12, Feb. 20, 1926.

prohibition. In the opinion of the News Leader, he should not be asked to do more. The candidacy of local-optionist Harry Tucker for Governor of Virginia in 1921 again brought prohibition to the fore in the Old Dominion. Freeman was becoming increasingly concerned about the overriding importance of the prohibition issue in political campaigns, and he warned that America would lose if a man who opposed prohibition "honestly and without selfish motives is permanently to be proscribed" from office. America would likewise suffer "if a candidate's record on prohibition is a passport to office, however incompetent the man may be." Support for prohibition should not be a test for political officeholding, for if prohibition were to fail it would do so "on the streets and on the highways, and not at the polls or in the legislative halls." Yet when the avowedly "wet" Alfred E. Smith sought the Democratic nomination for president in 1924 and 1928, there was no way that prohibition could be kept out of politics.<sup>2</sup>

Another phenomenon of the 1920s that was intimately bound up with prohibition but often touched even deeper nerves was religious intolerance. The Ku Klux Klan enjoyed a resurgence during the decade and directed many of its activities against foreigners and Catholics as well as blacks. In the wake of the xenophobia that swept the nation after World War I, the Klan offered a program of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1920, Aug. 4, 1921.

"Americanism." Freeman announced that the News Leader might be in full sympathy with any of the Klan's ideals that were constructive, but he admitted that the name Ku Klux Klan conjured up images of terrorization and mystery, which no longer availed for a solution to the South's problems. "Instead of mystery, open council is needed; instead of terrorization, education," he asserted. "To revive the name, even for a program of distinct Americanism, is to arouse apprehensions that cannot help and may hinder." When the "American Civic Association" organized in Richmond in 1921, Freeman suspected it of being a front for the Klan. He challenged the group to prove that it was not the KKK in disguise. The News Leader conducted an investigation of the group and found it to be more of an anti-Catholic organization than an anti-Negro or anti-Semitic one. A personal threat against him did not dissuade Freeman from his determination to expose any group that opposed "absolute freedom of conscience." The threat was not carried out, and Freeman eventually concluded that "the organization probably will disintegrate or become simply a fraternal society of a more or less harmless sort."<sup>2</sup>

Yet he never ceased to expose and denounce any evidence of religious bigotry. When the Virginia Klan opposed the election of Roman Catholic state treasurer John M. Purcell,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Nov. 16, 1920, July 30, Aug. 6, 1921; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, Aug. 1, Aug. 5, Aug. 7, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 5.

appointed by Governor Trinkle to fill an unexpired term, Freeman asked indignantly: "Was there any criticism of John Purcell's religion during all the years he held a difficult clerkship in the state treasurer's office and did far more than he was paid for?" A Catholic could apparently die for his country but could not work for her -- at least not in a well-paid job. That was the worst injustice. The worst danger was that "intolerance, once it becomes fixed, will produce cleavages and lasting hates fatal to Democracy." As he often did, Freeman sought to lead by example as well as with words. On Mother's Day, 1927, approximately 200 members of the Richmond Council of the Knights of Columbus responded to Freeman's invitation to attend his Business Men's Bible Class at Second Baptist Church.<sup>4</sup>

Freeman taught the Business Men's Bible Class throughout most of the 1920s. He attracted some enormous crowds, including one of over 1,100 men and women on Mother's Day, 1922. Transcripts of some of his talks to the class provide a glimpse of his religious views at the time. The fundamentals of his faith remained unchanged. Work is holy, and through work man can come to know God and His divine purpose. "Cleave the wood of your hard, dally toil," he told the class, "and there, ever new, ever born anew, ever newly risen to every newly awakened soul; there

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<sup>4</sup>Ferrell, Claude A. Swanson, 144; NL, Nov. 4, 1925, May 9, 1927.

everywhere in life -- there is the risen Christ." None of God's gifts should be wasted. "Some of us are fortunate enough to receive from our parents that greatest inheritance -- clean blood, right-thinking ancestry," he said. All men, by reason of their inheritance, by reason of their mental assets, know that they are charged with a trust. "We are executors, each of us; we are stewards who have received from a departing king the talents in trust for him." The most important talent of all is faith. "On that foundation the whole structure of achievement can be built," Freeman affirmed. "With that initial investment the treasury of the world is yours to command, for from faith comes conviction, and from conviction comes leadership, and from leadership comes service, and from service grow all the great things of life." Money, whether inherited or earned, should not be misused, for "thrift is of God." Even worse than the wastage of money is the wastage of time. Yet few men appreciate the sacredness of time, and Freeman apprehended that few would agree with him that "when we waste time, we sin." He concluded that most of man's activity is between the ages of 25 and 60 and calculated that those 35 years give a man slightly less than 11,000 working days, something less than 175,000 waking hours. "In those we achieve that which is our end as the night draws on and the balance of the years is reckoned," he

asserted. "During that time we waste immoderately, inexcusably."<sup>5</sup>

Freeman believed "that only a few people could attain to immortality." Though he professed belief in a hell on earth, he was less certain about the existence of a hell hereafter. He thought it "quite possible" that such an eternal hell did exist. "But I also know this, thank God!" he declared. "That for a few vague and equivocal references in Jesus' teachings about the doctrine of hell, there are hundreds of magnificent unequivocal passages, the purport of which no man may doubt, showing that love is eternal; that those who attain to love, attain to eternity." He found the greatest cause for belief in immortality in his study of history:

I would say that the study of history is that which gives man the greatest optimism, for if man was not destined by his Maker to go on until the Kingdom of Heaven is attained, man would have been extinguished long ago by reason of all man's mistakes and frailties. Man was made to be immortal, else he could not survive being the fool he is.<sup>6</sup>

Pessimism, on the other hand, "has its origin in

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<sup>5</sup>Second Baptist Church (Richmond), The Ideal (June, 1922), 5; DSF, "He Goeth Before" (typed transcript, April 12, 1925), "The Safe Executor" (typed transcript, Feb. 22, 1925), "Spring" (typed transcript, April 19, 1925), "The Value of Time" (typed transcript, Nov. 30, 1924), all in DSFP-LC, Box 126.

<sup>6</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, May 26, 1924, DSFP-LC, Box 177; DSF, "Santa Claus on the Street" (typed transcript, Dec. 20, 1924), Untitled Religious Lecture (March 29, 1925), both in DSFP-LC, Box 126.



indigestion." Freeman proposed making a historical investigation to "see how much of the gloomy outlook of John Calvin and those other great apostles of gloom had its origin in their health." Far from a life of gloom, the life of a loving Christian is filled with Joy. And the greatest Joy of all for the Christian is the ability to say each day: "Thank God, I have kept my self-respect this day; I have put no new burden on my conscience!" The Christian will experience failures, but if he accepts responsibility for them and learns by them, he will ultimately succeed. "Study the things you want to do; study your mistakes; study the handicap of your own equipment, of your own temper, of your own spirit," Freeman urged. Above all, a man must never lose faith: "When you lose faith in yourself, when you lose faith in your fellow-man; when you lose faith in God, then -- but oh God, not until then -- are you lost."<sup>7</sup>

Freeman had long hoped for "the day when there shall be an end of denominational lines, -- when there shall be 'one shepherd and one flock,' and all shall work for the glory of God." Yet he treasured the church of his fathers, for the Baptist tradition imposed no strict set of beliefs on its followers. "I let no man say what I shall or shall not believe. That is one of the fundamentals of being a Baptist," he told his class. "The fundamental of your faith

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<sup>7</sup>DSF, "What Men Live By" (typed transcript, May 24, 1925), "Spring" (typed transcript, April 19, 1925), Untitled Religious Lecture (March 8, 1925), all in DSFP-LC, Box 126.

is to interpret God for yourself -- to let no man say what you shall or shall not believe." He thus felt free to believe that while Jesus was the Son of God who "brought us the ideal of life and laid down for us enduring rules of conduct," the revelation of God was progressive:

Jesus never taught us that the revelation of God was complete. On the contrary, in his last discourse to his disciples, He told them that 'greater works than these shall ye do.' By that I think he meant that as his influence worked in them and through them, age on age, the mind of man would be enlarged until it became capable of sensing many things unknown to them. It has been so. We know more of truth today than the disciples knew. Our vision is wider. Where they marvelled at the thunder, we understand. Where they saw some 2,000 stars, we can look through a great telescope into the heavens and can see a host now estimated at 7,000,000. Where they looked upon plague as a visitation from God, we know its cause and the method of preventing it. So the process will go on, through larger and still larger horizons until that day, ages hence perhaps, when the 'kingdom of earth will become the kingdom of heaven.' Jesus taught us that the 'kingdom of God is within you.' That is full revelation in itself, its consequences involve a growing revelation. Take Jesus as complete in that He disclosed: The rest we may get as we walk in his steps and unselfishly labor in his spirit.<sup>9</sup>

For Freeman, then, science and faith were not incompatible, but rather complementary. Some Virginia Baptists did not concur. The Fundamentalist wing of the denomination sought to secure passage of a bill forbidding

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<sup>9</sup>DSF to Walker B. Freeman, Oct. 19, 1907, DSFC-JHU; DSF, "Growth" (typed transcript, May 3, 1925), DSFP-LC, Box 126; DSF to Mrs. R. L. Chenery, April 5, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 5.

the teaching of the theory of evolution in the public schools. Freeman's influence was largely responsible for defeating this effort. In fact, the Old Dominion was the only Southern state whose legislature never had to consider an anti-evolution bill during the 1920s. Freeman used the famous Scopes "monkey trial" of 1925 as an opportunity to state editorially his personal belief in God and evolution. He chastised William Jennings Bryan for making the Scopes case "a duel to the death" between science and Christianity. He did not fear the effect of Bryan's dogmatism on those who, like himself, found the hand of God revealed in new scientific discoveries. "Men who believe that God speaks in the stone as certainly as in the commandments written on it, men who are convinced that growth and progress are part of a mighty plan proclaimed in star and in sea -- as surely as in law and in gospel -- these men find evolution a help rather than a hindrance, when it is properly interpreted," he wrote. "They have much of the thrill that comes to those who begin to see in daylight the form and the meaning of things that were mysterious and affrighting in the dark." Rather, Freeman feared the effect of Bryan's crusade on impressionable students, many of whom might "become out-and-out materialists" solely because Bryan sought to keep them, "for his little day, from fellowship with the company of those who do not say 'God or evolution, but God and evolution.'"

The editor did express some feelings of pity for Bryan. "Forgetting the evolution quarrel for a moment, forgetting the follies and foibles and conceits of the bald and beardless warrior, the sensitive man finds moisture in his eyes," he lamented. "Those brave days of The Cross of Gold and Crown of Thorns are gone forever." Yet he concluded that Bryan "made a conspicuous failure" at Dayton "because he utterly failed to win anybody to faith in the unseen by his puerile denials of the seen." Clarence Darrow, the attorney for John Thomas Scopes, also drew Freeman's ire "because, while preaching tolerance, he practiced vindictive oppression." If Bryan "alienated a multitude who reasoned ... that if William J. Bryan was typical of religion, then religion was not for them," it was equally clear to the average man "that if Darrow was typical of tolerance, then tolerance was mighty undesirable." Freeman summarized the whole episode as "discreditable to American intelligence."<sup>2</sup>

The struggles over prohibition and religious intolerance came to the fore with Al Smith's quest for the White House in 1928. After the Democratic debacles in 1920 and 1924, Freeman feared that the nomination of another compromise candidate, such as James M. Cox or John W. Davis, "would mean the going to pieces of the Democratic party." The Democrats were doomed if they did not "put up an active,

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<sup>2</sup>Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South (Chapel Hill, 1932), 305; NL, July 9, July 18, July 22, July 24, 1925.

good candidate" in 1928. Freeman himself saw Al Smith as the best choice and told his Current Events Class in 1927 that the News Leader "was as sympathetic as it was thought the people would stand for." Although this statement reflected the editor's awareness of the odds against the wet, Catholic New Yorker in the South, he believed Smith's nomination would offer several benefits to the region. First of all, Southern support for Smith's candidacy would be a victory for tolerance. As such, it would "be an offset to the KKK" and "would be a rebuke to the Baptist-Methodist coalition which is riding our withers raw." Even if Smith's nomination split the Solid South, Freeman saw only good resulting, for such a split would mean the South's "political emancipation." He had little hope that Southern delegates to the Democratic convention would actively support Smith because of their fear of clerical opposition but hoped that they would fall in line after Smith had secured the necessary two-thirds majority.<sup>10</sup>

Freeman feared the divisive effect of the prohibition issue on Smith's chances. Just prior to Smith's nomination, he wrote to the Governor and warned him against advocating the repeal of the 18th Amendment in his speech of acceptance. "We have a difficult problem in the South as it is," he told the candidate, "though I think we can carry

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<sup>10</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Sept. 13, 1926, March 28, 1927, May 14, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 178.

every Southern state except, perhaps, Tennessee. If you declare against the Eighteenth Amendment, or for any referendum on it, I would not answer for the outcome of any Southern states except Florida and Louisiana." Governor Smith ignored this advice, and Freeman sought thereafter to minimize the importance of prohibition as a campaign issue. Prohibition could not be an issue, he asserted, because no matter what recommendations Mr. Smith made with regard to the subject, "no revision of the eighteenth amendment will get the required two-thirds vote in each branch of congress, and if it did, it would not receive the vote of three-fourths of the states." No, the real campaign issue was the issue of "candor against evasion -- the issue of whether a candidate shall say what he thinks, courageously and plainly, or whether he shall be permitted to conceal a partisan purpose behind a smokescreen of vague words." Having failed to dissuade Smith from taking a firm stand on prohibition, Freeman now praised him for doing just that.<sup>11</sup>

It soon became apparent that the main issue in the campaign, especially in the South, was really one of religious intolerance. Freeman estimated that "eighty per cent. of the opposition to Smith has its origin in religious prejudice." Thus, four-fifths of those who

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<sup>11</sup>DSF to Alfred Emanuel Smith, Aug. 11, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 13; NL, Aug. 23, 1928.

opposed the Democratic nominee did not oppose the Smith who challenged prohibition or Smith the Tammany Hall politician. Rather, said Freeman, it was "the Smith who has exercised the right of religious liberty guaranteed every American." The 1928 campaign was therefore the most critical in the South since that of 1860, for it raised the question "whether religious liberty shall be maintained, or whether it shall be destroyed, and with it the party that saved the South." Freeman became increasingly dismayed at the tone of the campaign in Virginia. When Harry W. Anderson, the Republican leader he had often commended, charged that Tammany had taken control of the Democratic organization and appointed "a high official of the Vatican" as party chairman, the editor condemned him. "Surely Mr. Anderson knows how much the South has suffered from the divisions born of racial prejudice: how can he, then, be a party to stirring up religious prejudice, which is vastly more destructive?"<sup>12</sup>

Other, more traditional, issues occasionally emerged. Freeman admitted to his Current Events Class that there was little difference in the platforms of the two parties, but thought that Smith would bring the Democratic party and the nation back to a liberal approach to the problems of the day. He no longer had much faith in Herbert Hoover, the

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<sup>12</sup>DSF to J. Marshall Vanneman, Sept. 7, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 14; NL, Aug. 29, Sept. 7, 1928.

Republican nominee. When Republicans berated Smith for his close ties to Tammany Hall, Freeman pointed out that the GOP was not only the party of "Silent Cal" Coolidge but of Albert Fall and Harry Daugherty and others tainted by scandal. Hoover could talk of the glories of the GOP, wrote Freeman, "but he cannot quite drown out the sound of the convicts' chains from Indiana." Hoover cited overproduction as the chief cause of the agricultural depression, but in arguing for a higher tariff, "he must know that stiffer duties will only increase the prices to the farmer of the goods he must buy in a protected domestic market." In almost the same breath that he championed the tariff, Mr. Hoover argued for enlarged foreign trade as a means of reducing the agricultural surplus. Echoing the warning of Woodrow Wilson, Freeman asserted: "We cannot raise our tariff wall to the sky and expect Europe to throw us over it a bag of gold for interest on our debt." He believed that Smith had demonstrated his ability to handle agricultural problems through his sponsorship of New York's model cooperative marketing laws. Freeman endorsed Smith's proposal for a non-partisan commission to study the feasibility of the McNary-Haugen bill, even though the News Leader had opposed the bill. If no practicable alternative could be found to the McNary-Haugen plan of government assistance in the controlled sale of surplus farm products, then the plight of the farmer justified the experiment.



Freeman hoped that Southern cooperation to revive American agriculture would lead to the union of South and West that he had long desired. Such a union, he felt, "would temper somewhat the radicalism of the West and liberalize the South." The time was ripe for this union "now that the Democratic party has as its standard-bearer a man who will make it once more the liberal party of America."<sup>12</sup>

Yet neither corruption nor agricultural policy nor even prohibition could outpace religion as the key issue of the campaign. As the contest entered the home stretch amid increasingly vitriolic charges and countercharges, Freeman cautioned voters against taking the election too seriously. "It is right to have convictions and contend for them, but what is the good in permitting animosities to be aroused that will outlive the campaign?" he asked his readers. "The good-will of your neighbors means more to you than victory for the candidate you favor." But Freeman himself was finding it more and more difficult to follow his own advice. Though he rarely made direct editorial references any more to the evils of the Reconstruction era, this most bitter of campaigns brought forth a series of articles on the postbellum excesses of the GOP. In an editorial entitled "The Rape of Virginia," Freeman reminded his readers that Republican transgressions against the Old Dominion began

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<sup>12</sup>"Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Oct. 8, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 176; NL, Aug. 13, Aug. 23, Sept. 20, 1928.

even before the Confederacy's defeat. The separation of West Virginia from the mother state "was in many ways the greatest economic calamity that ever befell [Virginia]." At the end of the series, Freeman told his readers that the purpose of retelling the tale of Republican misrule during Reconstruction was not to combat religious prejudice with race prejudice. Blacks were not to blame for the sins committed in their name. Nor should the individual Republican of the 1920s be held accountable. "But," he concluded, "history is history."<sup>14</sup>

During the last week of the campaign, Freeman appealed to Virginians' belief in their traditional values as well as to their historical consciousness. "The News Leader is anxious that here in the city where the statute of religious liberty was put into the laws of the commonwealth, no man or woman shall sin against American institutions by opposing any honest candidate because of his religion," he asserted. "Richmond ought to be spared that humiliation. She has suffered from fire, from war, and from pestilence; it must be that she has intelligence enough to disdain religious hatred that is worse than any of these." Speaking for those Virginians who could not subordinate all their political faith to the opposition's view of prohibition or Catholicism, Freeman declared that they had not been

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Sept. 21, Sept. 24, Sept. 27, Sept. 28, Sept. 29, 1928.

"bought" by Tammany Hall. "We may be old-fashioned in our political faith," he maintained, "but we are not conspirators against church or state. Ninety-five per cent. of us are the descendants of those at whose instance the statute of religious liberty was enacted, and we are trying to hold to its spirit and to its letter." In his final appeal to the jury of voters, the editor summarized the case for the Democrats: "Is Virginia to remain true to the party that has made her one of the best governed and most progressive of all the American states, or is she to permit a combination of Republican politicians, Anti-Saloon leaders and Ku Klux Klansmen to deliver her over to the party that had thrice despoiled her and is now waiting another opportunity to seize power?" Freeman admitted to his Current Events Class that three years earlier he might have said that a Republican victory would be a good thing for Virginia. But after the achievements of Harry Byrd and the promise they held for the future, he felt that victory by the GOP in the state would be a calamity. A vote for Hoover would not be a vote against Smith but a vote against Virginia. "It is not only loyalty to the liberal party and to the principle of equal rights that is at issue," he wrote on election eve. "It is loyalty to Mother Virginia as well."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Nov. 1, Nov. 3, Nov. 5, 1928; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Aug. 27, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 178.

Yet neither Freeman's reminders of Republican sins nor his higher appeal to Virginia ideals nor even Harry Byrd's powers of political persuasion could stem the tide of anti-Smith sentiment in the Old Dominion. Hoover carried Virginia by almost 25,000 votes and pulled in three new Republican Congressmen on his coattails. The outcome stunned the commonwealth's Democratic leaders. Although it had lamented the late start of the Smith campaign in Virginia, the News Leader had expected the Democratic nominee to win. The paper concluded that Smith was the victim of a three-pronged attack by the Republicans, the Ku Klux Klan and the Anti-Saloon League, which enlisted the support of thousands of women. Freeman urged his fellow Richmonders to "waste no time in a post mortem" and get back to business. "You may not like the result -- but the overwhelming majority for Hoover is the expression of a will that every American is in honor bound to respect, so, smile and keep your faith in Virginia," he counselled. Outwardly, he continued to affirm his own faith in the future of his state and region, but he allowed himself at least one public expression of doubt:

Some there are who have given years to reasoning with the prejudices of the South, who have worn their hearts away trying to stir a somnolent people, who have taken first-rate abilities and have exhausted them in teaching a handful of students in a college that had little library and less laboratory, who have been kept to small business, though they had personality that might have sufficed to organize great industry. At the end, they had

a hundred thousand where they might have had a million, a little reputation in their own state where they might have been national figures.

As John Gignilliat has noted, such an assessment of the limitations imposed by conditions in the South represented a stern indictment coming from so tactful a writer as Freeman.<sup>14</sup>

The results of the election of 1928 also convinced Freeman that the time for restraint had passed when discussing prohibition and the dangerous mixing of religion and politics. The News Leader began openly advocating changes in the prohibition laws, and the editor decided to take off the gloves when he wrote of Bishop James Cannon, the Methodist cleric who had led the fight against Smith in Virginia. Freeman had refrained from direct editorial censure of Cannon even during the bitter days of the 1928 campaign. Yet when the bishop sought to use the Virginia state elections of 1929 as a means of punishing those who had supported Smith, the News Leader assailed him. Freeman still had enough faith in Virginia to believe that the voters would repudiate Cannon, whose reputation was already tarnished by charges of shady financial dealings. "Dr. Cannon may rail and may rave and may seek to exorcise party

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<sup>14</sup>James R. Sweeney, "Rum, Romanism, and Virginia Democrats: The Party Leaders and the Campaign of 1928," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Oct., 1982), 425; NL, Nov. 7, Nov. 9, Nov. 10, Nov. 24, 1928; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 406.

demons that his egomania has fashioned," he wrote.

"Virginia's feet are in the road of progress, of unity, of social justice and of equal opportunity, and she will not stop to answer his vain and bitter words." He did not hold the Methodist Church responsible for Bishop Cannon's actions, but he acknowledged the hold Cannon had on his admirers and friends: "If he rages, they froth; if he were to keep silent on politics, so would they." Yet Freeman had little hope that the bishop would keep silent, for he "grows in violence, rather than otherwise, and is disposed to magnify the function of the 'moral forces' of which he is the self-anointed apostle." Though memories of the previous year's campaign were not easily forgotten, the News Leader expressed relief when Cannon's old adversary John Garland Pollard was elected Governor of Virginia in 1929.

Virginians looked to their ministers for leadership when a real "moral issue" was at stake, but by going against Cannon's wishes they showed that "they will not countenance the invention of a fake moral issue to further a clerical dictatorship in politics." Freeman asserted that both prohibition and religion were more secure in Virginia "because the people have at last taken the measure of James Cannon."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 404; NL, Oct. 8, Oct. 19, Nov. 6, 1929. On the Virginia gubernatorial race of 1929, see Alvin L. Hall, "Virginia Back in the Fold: The Gubernatorial Campaign and Election of 1929," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (July, 1965), 280-302.

Desperate as the political struggle had been during the summer of 1929, Douglas Freeman had been locked in an even more desperate battle, one that threatened for a time to be his last. On the evening of Monday, May 27, he was rushed to St. Elizabeth's Hospital for emergency surgery to repair a recurrence of the hernia that he had suffered in childhood and that had kept him out of military service in the war. Life-threatening complications set in and resulted in the removal of about one and one-half feet of intestines. Under the watchful eye of Dr. O. O. Ashworth, he slowly regained his health. Not until September 2 was he able to resume limited duties at the newspaper office.<sup>10</sup>

During his 14-week recuperation, Freeman listened to Sunday morning radio broadcasts and determined that he could present a better program than any of those on the air. He was particularly anxious to provide better programming for those who were confined by illness or infirmity. The result was a half-hour Sunday broadcast that came to be called "Lessons in Living" and continued until Freeman's death almost a quarter-century later. These talks, which were generally delivered without the use of notes, were even less concerned with theology than his Business Men's Bible Class talks had been. As the title of the program implied,

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<sup>10</sup>William H. Higgins, Jr., typed statement, Aug. 15, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 116; Henrietta B. Crump to E. E. Farman, May 29, 1929, DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Sept. 10, 1929, both in DSFP-LC, Box 10.

Freeman tried to impart to his listeners, many of whom were shut-ins, something of his philosophy of life, complete with practical advice on improving the quality of their own daily lives. He spoke on a broad range of topics, such as how to increase one's knowledge of history and science and what a person should read to keep up with current events. He developed a wide following, many of whom wrote for advice on subjects ranging from love to investments. Their questions provided topics for future broadcasts.<sup>12</sup>

The delivery of "Lessons in Living" precluded Freeman from continuing his more specifically religious Sunday school lessons at Second Baptist Church. Yet it is by no means certain that he would have continued as an active member in any event. The bitter religious and political quarrels of the Twenties had caused strained relations between Freeman and many of his Christian brethren. An example is offered by his denunciation of evangelist Billy Sunday, for whom he had once expressed admiration. On more than one occasion, he had to deny the rumor that he planned to forsake the Baptist denomination and become an Episcopalian. "I was born a Baptist, I expect to die a Baptist and I have no intention whatsoever of leaving the church in which I was reared and baptised," he retorted,

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<sup>12</sup>DSF to Brantley Henderson, Aug. 11, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 79; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 408; Cheek, "Reflections," 34; George F. Scheer, "Plutarch on the James," The Southern Packet (Feb., 1949), 3.



adding jocularly: "God forbid that I should seek the last refuge of broken down aristocracy." True to his word, he continued to support the Baptist Church financially and was buried from it, but after 1929 he rarely attended any church except when invited to preach. His faith became more private during the last quarter-century of his life. He rarely discussed religion even with his closest confidants, even though he did confess to one of his radio listeners that during his illness he "had a special revelation of Jesus so personal and so overwhelming that I have not dared to this day to describe it, even to my own wife." He read from the New Testament in the original Greek every day, and he made his daily devotions at a small altar that he kept in his otherwise spartan bedroom. In short, as his daughter has written, the mature Freeman did not talk about religion; he lived it. And his Christian faith continued to influence his writing even after his participation in public religious activities waned.<sup>20</sup>

During the closing years of the 1920s, Douglas Freeman had passed through the valley of the shadow of doubt and of death. The bitterness and intolerance that culminated in the presidential campaign of 1928 caused him to doubt the good will of many of his fellow Virginians and probably

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<sup>20</sup>NL, Jan. 13, 1919, Nov. 2, Nov. 5, 1928; DSF to Clarence Wyatt, March 21, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 14; Allen W. Freeman, "My Brother Douglas," 41-42; DSF to Mrs. M. B. Graves, May 22, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 13; Cheek, "Reflections," 38.

caused him to re-evaluate some of his own attitudes toward religion. When Virginia at last repudiated Bishop Cannon and his allies and returned to the regular Democratic fold in 1929, at least a measure of Freeman's faith in the future of the Old Dominion was restored. His close brush with death that same year deepened his personal commitment to Christ, if not to organized Christianity. A new crisis that arose in 1929 would further challenge some of his long-held beliefs just as it challenged the nation's leaders to find solutions.

## CHAPTER IX

### DEPRESSION AND NEW DEAL

While Douglas Freeman fought to regain his strength during the summer of 1929, the American economy, which had appeared so robust during the "Roaring Twenties," began to show signs of weakness. Industrial output, housing construction and commodity prices all declined as unemployment and business inventories rose. Yet despite these and other warning signs, the "Great Bull Market" of the 1920s continued on Wall Street. Not until late September did the stock market start to give evidence of weakening. Stock prices began to fluctuate, with a sharp decline during the week of October 14-19. Further drops took place the following week. Then between "Black Thursday," October 24 and "Black Tuesday," October 29, the market collapsed in what came to be known simply as the "Great Crash." Prices continued to plummet until, by mid-November, securities listed on the New York Stock Exchange had lost over 40% of their face value. Freeman, like most Americans including President Hoover, was concerned but remained confident about the overall soundness of the American economy. Writing on "Black Thursday," he admitted that the market plunges of October 21 and October 23 "may have been no more than the preliminaries of a still greater decline." Yet he stressed the general health of

industry, the increased buying power of the country and the stockpiling of much surplus wealth during the years of the Great Bull Market and concluded: "If industry showed signs of slowing down while the speculative mania was sweeping the country, the fall might be calamitous, but with factories busy and the general demand heavy, there is little reason to anticipate a general smash-up in the market." The "general smash-up" came, but Freeman felt that the "economic effects of the current decline are not apt to be very serious." Like many others in and out of the news media, he compared current economic conditions with those in the panic years of 1893 and 1907 and found reasons for optimism in the comparison. "Basically," he observed, "the difference is that between a debtor and a creditor nation, between the diffusion and the concentration of financial resources." Clearly, he was not prepared for the economic crisis that ensued.<sup>1</sup>

Nor did his traditional values of thrift and perseverance make him comfortable with many of the steps taken to meet the crisis. As the depression deepened in 1930, President Hoover came under increased pressure to provide government relief for the growing army of unemployed. Hoover was reluctant, but in his annual message to Congress on December 2, he did propose an increase of

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Sobel, The Great Bull Market: Wall Street in the 1920s (New York, 1968), 129-42; NL, Oct. 24, Oct. 31, 1929.

from \$100,000,000 to \$150,000,000 in the existing federal public works budget. Freeman, never comfortable with federal involvement in the economy and opposed to peacetime budget deficits, was even more cautious than the President. Indeed, he accused Hoover of being in a "panic" that must be controlled. When unofficial estimates placed the probable federal deficit at \$400,000,000 if all of Hoover's legislation were approved, the editor asked: "Is the relief from unemployment that can be effected by these lavish expenditures worth the price that must be paid in heavy taxes and higher interest rates on government borrowings? The News Leader does not believe it." A few days later he conceded that "government building may be extended somewhat," but warned that "foolish gallery-play and wild expenditures will only disappoint the unemployed, pile up a deficit of nearly half a billion dollars and force an increase in the income tax." Freeman feared that employers would resort to drastic wage cuts if they found themselves burdened with new taxes, which would not raise enough revenue to provide for the luckless unemployed in any event. No, the unemployment problem could not be solved through emergency relief appropriations or public works projects. "America," declared Freeman, "cannot attempt to buy spurious prosperity in times of adversity and not pay for it -- by delaying the return of true prosperity." Instead, the nation should "approach the question locally and through

existing industrial organization, and she must be prepared to suffer until she is wise enough to inaugurate in times of prosperity a policy of unemployment insurance and a program of 'reserve construction' for dull times." On New Year's Day, Freeman rang in 1931 with an editorial that was both reassuring and stern. "To some men," he wrote, "the depression has been worth all it has cost them in the warning it has given them that in the quest of success there is no substitute for daily plugging away!" Some men, he continued, "had to lose their profits to save their souls. Over-easy money had given them false gods." He offered his own personal creed as a prescription for the nation's ills:

The struggle is for the fittest. The weak may go under. But there is one verity written invisibly across every sheet of that new daily desk calendar of yours: WORK (and plenty of it), BRAINS (and the hard use of them), FAIR PLAY (and no dodging it for an extra dollar) always have and always will bring happiness and as much prosperity as is good for any of us.<sup>2</sup>

As the Great Depression worsened, Freeman did attempt to accomodate his personal values to changing conditions. He admitted the necessity for some government relief, though he preferred that it come at the local and state levels. He confessed that Hoover's proposal for a "reserve building program" was a "suitable" idea but emphasized the need to prepare building plans in times of prosperity. He continued

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<sup>2</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 410-12; NL, Dec. 2, Dec. 6, Dec. 9, Dec. 10, Dec. 12, 1930, Jan. 1, 1931.

to prefer voluntary relief efforts, such as one in which men's Bible classes throughout Richmond raised funds to put idle men to work cleaning the city's parks. And he continued to advocate individual sacrifice and fair play. He urged landlords to be lenient and wait for better times to collect arrearages. "Relief can only come through self-sacrifice, through the employment of credit, through the exercise of ingenuity on the farm and in the kitchen, and through the co-operation of friends and neighbors, near and far," he told his readers. As he nearly always did when he sought to rally his fellow Virginians, Freeman appealed to their pride in their past:

People have had so much prosperity that it has sapped the initiative of many of them. Their great-grandfathers went through the panic of the 30's unafraid; their grandfathers bore uncomplainingly the miseries of the war between the states and the outlawry of reconstruction; their own fathers met the panic of 1893 by tightening their belts and setting their tables according to their pocketbooks.

Were the sons of these noble fathers so spoiled that they expected government to support them? Millions were "deceived by the belief that there is some way of escaping the operation of economic law -- some mysterious substitute in government for thrift and enterprise and self-sacrifice in a pinch." Freeman declared that there was no such way, no such substitute, and that the sooner people found it out,

the sooner prosperity would return.<sup>2</sup>

Just as he called for sacrifice and thrift from the individual, Freeman also demanded economy from the federal government. He thought a federal spending reduction of 10% could be effected easily enough. All departmental expansion of every sort, except that which provided large-scale employment, could be stopped. At least a quarter of all government publications could be suspended. Navy construction could be suspended as well. Only after such cuts had been made in the federal budget should the government resort to higher taxes. If a tax increase became necessary, Freeman suggested raising surtaxes on the higher income brackets, doubling the estate tax and cutting the personal income tax reduction to \$750 for a single man and \$1,250 for a married man. This last step would not greatly increase revenues but would increase the number of citizens with an interest in holding down federal spending. Freeman excoriated "cowardly time-servers" in Congress who argued that since the United States had rapidly reduced its war debt the nation could afford an increase in deficit spending. The present generation was responsible for both the war and the depression. "Why," asked Freeman, "should we pass on the repair bills to posterity?" He advocated "[e]conomy first; then, if need be, new taxes, and only

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Feb. 10, Feb. 12, Feb. 16, Feb. 18, Sept. 7, 1931.



last -- in desperate extremity -- an increase of debt." He wished for "a little benevolent autocracy" whereby President Hoover "could bring congress together, coax it into voting taxes to cover the deficit, and then send it home again." But he had lost most of what little faith he had left in Herbert Hoover. In July, 1931, he had applauded Mr. Hoover's announcement of deep budget cuts, but less than two months later he noted that "the confused, unhappy chief executive quickly veered away from an economy program, and has had nothing to say about it since."<sup>4</sup>

Freeman held the Republican party responsible for many of the economic evils that had befallen the nation. He believed that the GOP's policies during the Twenties had served mainly to benefit the wealthy industrialists of the Northeast at the expense of Southern and Western farmers and of small businessmen and wage earners everywhere. No Republican policy drew more of his ire than the protectionist trade policy, with the Hawley-Smoot tariff of 1930 being the crowning injustice. When this bill was first debated, before the onset of the depression, Freeman denounced it as "a work of evil, done in darkness" by the great manufacturers and sugar-refiners. After it became law, he called it "the worst disservice we have rendered the world in a long time" and told his Current Events Class that if he were made dictator with the task of overcoming the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Sept. 12, Nov. 17, Dec. 1, 1931.

depression, he would order downward revision of the tariff. He had hoped that Hoover would veto the measure but admitted: "Truth is, the Republican party has regarded the election of 1928 as warrant to proceed with the rewriting of the tariff in any terms that may please the manufacturers." He did see hope for the Democrats as a result of Hawley-Smoot, "[f]or if all the interests of the country, agricultural, manufacturing and mineral, are given the fullest protection they ask, the country will someday realize that cupidity has outreached itself." He agreed with Virginia's Governor Pollard in 1931 that the Democratic party should make its main fight in the campaign of 1932 on the tariff, but he was apprehensive that prohibition might be the paramount issue once more.<sup>5</sup>

Freeman welcomed the return of the Democrats to control of the House of Representatives in 1931, but he was under no illusions. "The Democratic party is in power not because it is Democratic, but because it is not Republican," he explained. "It is elected in protest, not approval." It was essential that the Democrats convince the country that they had an intelligent plan for dealing with the industrial situation. As for the party's presidential nominee for 1932, the News Leader endorsed Stewart Bryan's friend Newton Diehl Baker. The editor admired Baker for his work as

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., May 8, May 9, Oct. 15, Oct. 18, 1929, Feb. 14, 1931; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Nov. 10, 1930, Feb. 11, 1932, DSFP-LC, Box 176.

Secretary of War under Woodrow Wilson and said that the nation needed the Ohloan now just as it had needed him during the war. "In 1917, Mr. Baker prepared the way to send 2,000,000 men over the top," he wrote. "In 1932, his country needs him again, and the man who sent others cannot fall, in such a time as this, to answer that call himself." Freeman wrote a personal letter to Baker telling the Cleveland attorney of the strong support he had among Richmond businessmen and professionals. This support was reflected in a poll of the News Leader Current Events Class that showed 18 members favoring Baker for the Democratic nomination, six supporting Virginia's own Harry F. Byrd, two for Owen D. Young, one for Maryland's Governor Albert Ritchie and none in favor of New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Governor Roosevelt visited Stewart Bryan at the publisher's home, "Laburnum," but the two men developed no particular affection for one another. Freeman later surmised that the two men "may have been too much alike socially to like each other greatly." Yet when Roosevelt emerged as the clear frontrunner, the News Leader expressed satisfaction. The New York governor, said Freeman, "is in rebellion against a government policy of economic rehabilitation that begins at the top and extends downward." Rather than helping the banker help the farmer, Roosevelt would help the farmer help himself. His declaration of his personal platform, which emphasized farm

relief, assistance to the homeowner and downward revision of the tariff, marked him definitely as the candidate of "the liberal agrarian wing" of the Democratic party. "He will win on an advanced platform or go down before a frightened army of conservatives," Freeman asserted. "His stand is taken: The Democrats must either stand with him or refuse to nominate him." Freeman disagreed with Walter Lippmann, who predicted that Roosevelt's nomination would bring about another campaign of 1896, when William Jennings Bryan's radicalism arrayed the East against the Democrats and alienated Southern conservatives. Freeman believed that FDR would run on a liberal platform much like that of 1896 but that he would "probably avoid a radical currency policy." Overall, the News Leader was pleased with both the nominee and the party platform, which finally "threw caution to the winds" and included a positive plank calling for the repeal of prohibition.<sup>4</sup>

Freeman did have a certain amount of sympathy for the embattled President Hoover. "Of Mr. Hoover's sincerity, there can be no question," he wrote in 1931. "He wants to do his utmost for the betterment of business (who does not?); but of Mr. Hoover's temperamental ability to assume the leadership in practical measures, the country will ask

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<sup>4</sup>NL, Sept. 14, Nov. 11, Dec. 8, Dec. 14, 1931, April 9, June 27, June 30, 1932; DSF to Newton D. Baker, Nov. 2, 1931, DSFP-LC, Box 19; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Jan. 14, 1932, DSFP-LC, Box 176.

better credentials than his past performances or his present vague proposals." After representing Stewart Bryan at a conference of publishers called by Hoover in May, 1932, Freeman told his boss that "Mr. Hoover looked tired and discouraged but he was mentally awake and did not give the impression of a man who was beaten." Reporting editorially on the conference, he wrote that "Mr. Hoover belongs to the class of the unlucky presidents -- and he knows it." Yet sympathy for Hoover the man did not translate into sympathy for Hoover the Republican politician. "Billions for organized business is his motto; not one cent for the individual," Freeman summarized Hoover's annual message to Congress in December, 1931. By the time the Roosevelt-Hoover contest of 1932 entered its final week, the News Leader had trained all of its editorial guns on the unhappy man in the White House. When Hoover, in a speech at New York's Madison Square Garden, said that "the grass will grow in the streets of a hundred cities" if Roosevelt were elected, Freeman remarked that the incumbent "unwittingly gave one reason why that very thing has happened already." Four years had shown Hoover to be "the great promoter" rather than "the great engineer," and seldom "has a distinction meant more to a country's hurt." Hoover's "whole impulse is to play the game according to the rules that have yielded the largest profit to the smallest group." Had Hoover not entered public life in 1921,

"he probably would have found an ideal outlet for his ability in the organization of some vast holding company, in which a few men, by minimum investment and a maximum manipulation, could have used the savings of other men."

Freeman dismissed as ridiculous Hoover's charges that Roosevelt was "an apostle of radicalism and a herald of ruin." In fact, some of Hoover's own policies could herald ruin. Freeman was particularly apprehensive of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, created to make loans to banks and other businesses, and agreed with Virginia's Senator Carter Glass that President Hoover had "converted the treasury at Washington into a national pawn shop." When some of the new enterprises begun with RFC loans collapsed, the federal government would find itself "the owner of every type of industry in America, a 'national junk shop' indeed."<sup>7</sup>

By the time Freeman wrote his election eve editorial, the outcome was not in doubt. The election would not be a contest but an inquest, in which the American people would sit as a coroner's jury and bring in their verdict against Herbert Hoover, a man who "had kept so long the company of industrial kings that he had lost the common touch." Hoover, the News Leader charged, was so remote in mind from the struggle of the common man "that to this day he believes

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<sup>7</sup>NL, Dec. 9, Dec. 12, 1931, May 26, Nov. 1, Nov. 2, 1932; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, May 28, 1932, DSFP-LC, Box 15.

it is possible to reconstruct a wrecked industrial edifice from the top, not from the bottom." In turning from him to Roosevelt and the Democrats, the nation would expect no miracles. Americans knew that recovery from "long economic malpractice" would be slow. "But they have decided to change the doctor," Freeman wrote, "not only because they believe Roosevelt has skill but also because they believe he has human sympathy, human understanding and the will to help. It is the spirit that quickeneth." Freeman applauded the "peaceful political revolution" that Roosevelt's landslide victory represented, but he was pleased that FDR had made no "wild extravagant promises" to attempt the unattainable. The spirit with which Roosevelt administered the government would mean more than specific programs, for the slow cycle of depression and revival would "ultimately achieve what no government can accomplish in putting men back to work."<sup>2</sup>

Freeman expressed early approval for Roosevelt's personal style and his first political decisions. He praised Mr. Roosevelt's cabinet as "a group of specialists from a wide political bracket, conservative in finance but liberal in domestic politics and international relations." He continued to believe that the Democratic party was "liberal or lost" and felt that Roosevelt's cabinet choices demonstrated that the President-elect was of the same mind.

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<sup>2</sup>NL, Nov. 7, Nov. 9, 1932.

"He has left the road of caution that the Democratic party has followed for twelve years," Freeman said of FDR. "He may have to pass through the wilderness, but he is striking for higher ground." Freeman also had praise for Roosevelt's effective use of radio. Unlike Coolidge and Hoover, whose radio addresses "had the cold formality of messages to congress or of solemn pronouncements on state occasions," President Roosevelt used the airwaves for a "direct appeal to the public." This shortening of the distance between Pennsylvania Avenue and Main Street represented "a new relationship between president and people" that Freeman found to be the most distinctive and encouraging quality of the new administration. Unlike some other Americans, he also found reassurance in the new relationship between the White House and Capitol Hill. He compared the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany with that of Roosevelt in the United States and noted that the worldwide economic emergency required that both men be vested with extraordinary powers. Whereas Hitler simply seized them, Roosevelt acquired them in even less time by asking for them. Freeman predicted that the Nazis would be driven from power, "either by a proletarian uprising or by a schism with the Junkers," and that when they were gone the German constitution would be "a museum-piece." When the emergency had passed in the United States, Congress would strip the executive of his special powers and would "leave the American constitutional



system unimpaired."<sup>9</sup>

Roosevelt's use of his extraordinary powers and his influence with the people and the Congress initially met with Freeman's editorial approval. The News Leader endorsed most of the legislation of the Hundred Days with only a few minor reservations. Freeman applauded Roosevelt's efforts to achieve a balanced federal budget, without which "general economic recovery is impossible." He regarded a balanced budget as absolutely essential to the success of FDR's program for reopening solvent banks. He had praise for the banking reforms themselves but feared that unless public confidence in banks could be restored, hoarding of currency would lead to a large inflation. Since confidence in banks was "a mirror of confidence in government," that government had to restore confidence by living "within its income, on a currency that is reasonably secured." The government had also to restore confidence in the sale of securities. Roosevelt, in devising his plan for the regulation of stock and bond sales, did not wish to destroy the stock exchange or investment banking, but, Freeman asserted, "he is determined that the buyer shall know precisely what he is getting."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman had long been concerned about the plight of the American farmer, and he was more willing to accept

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Feb. 22, Feb. 23, March 13, March 17, 1933.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Feb. 24, March 7, March 8, March 10, March 11, March 29, 1933.

experimentation in agricultural policy than in any other federal program. He regarded Roosevelt's decision to re-finance farm loans as "a daring measure" but concluded approvingly: "A desperate situation calls for a desperate remedy." The Agricultural Adjustment Act was another daring measure. "The whole proposal is staggering," Freeman observed. "It vests the president with power over agriculture as great as that which the Russian Soviets exercise, subject only to the control of congress in providing funds." Yet the country had been clamoring for "planned industry," and here it was -- "advanced for the relief of the most seriously prostrated of all American industries." The feasibility of the AAA's processors' tax was "open to challenge" and possibly represented "the wrong means to the right end." But America's agricultural crisis made the experiment worth trying. "The processors' tax may be a levy on the market-basket of the buyer," Freeman maintained, "but present prices are a tax on the existence of the farmer. We are eating up his inheritance, eating up the fertility of his soil."<sup>11</sup>

The perilous times of the early New Deal also made Freeman amenable to other forms of planning included in the National Industrial Recovery Act. Roosevelt's plan for the National Recovery Administration indicated to Freeman "a

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<sup>11</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 423-24; NL, March 17, March 25, April 4, 1933.

disposition to try conservative treatment before a 'radical operation' is performed." Yet the editor did not fail to see that NRA could have far-reaching consequences. "We probably would not exaggerate if we described it as the most revolutionary industrial program an American president has ever sponsored," he wrote. He saw only four courses open to America -- continued drift in a stormy economic sea, radical inflation of the currency, government regulation and the course opened by the NRA, which in essence was "national planning by industry itself" to prevent waste, overproduction and cut-throat competition. He left little doubt that he saw NRA as the best alternative and urged reluctant businessmen to comply with the NRA codes. "The extremists, of course, will continue to carp and to croak," he observed, "but the rest of us will let minor difference slumber and will work together for the success of a movement which, for all the practical difficulties involved in some industries, gives us good hope, not only of industrial recovery, but of a stable industrial order." He warned businessmen that if NRA failed, "we may prepare for something more drastic." Higher pay for industrial workers was only one desirable goal of NRA. The great goal was to provide new jobs for the vast numbers of unemployed. "The highest place on the role of honor belongs to those who increase their working force by the largest percentage of new employes," Freeman argued. In late October, 1933, the

News Leader reported the speculation that if the Supreme Court declared NRA unconstitutional, Roosevelt would respond by securing passage of a law whereby the older opposing Judges could be retired and replaced by "new men of sympathetic mind." Freeman admitted that this would be "a revolution as great as any that has been wrought during the struggle against the depression," but he voiced no opposition. As late as the autumn of 1933, he was still convinced that the national emergency justified continuing the NRA experiment.<sup>12</sup>

The National Industrial Recovery Act also set up the Public Works Administration to provide jobs for the unemployed. Freeman, it will be remembered, had initially opposed large-scale public works programs, but he had commended the spirit and the logic behind the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and he saw the wisdom in Roosevelt's proposal for the PWA. The NRA alone could not effect full re-employment of idle workers. This fact left a choice between public works and some form of inflation or devaluation of the currency. For Freeman this was no choice at all. A public works program would increase the public debt, but if prosperity returned, this debt could be paid off and the program halted. "But inflation may get out of hand," Freeman warned, "and devaluation would be a step from which the president could not turn back." Moreover, he saw

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., May 18, Aug. 5, Aug. 7, Aug. 8, Oct. 28, 1933.

lasting gains to Virginia resulting from PWA projects. He urged appropriation of funds for a sewage treatment plant in Hampton Roads, a project that would restore the state's valuable oyster beds and promote tourism. He supported the applications of several Virginia towns for federal money with which to erect municipal power plants and demanded an explanation when PWA director Harold L. Ickes was slow to approve such applications. He was particularly pleased that the Old Dominion's schools and colleges benefitted from PWA construction. The building of schools, dormitories and laboratories was not only a great gain in itself but created jobs for hundreds of idle workers as well as affording some relief to Virginians involved in the manufacturing and sale of fixtures and hardware used in the new structures. Only projects that seemed of dubious lasting value drew Freeman's fire. The creation of the Civil Works Administration in late 1933 fell into this category. Since regulations prohibited CWA workers from engaging in public works authorized by either the Reconstruction Finance Corporation or by Secretary Ickes, Freeman wondered just what the CWA was designed to accomplish other than to provide support for its employees. "It would be wasteful in the extreme to take the new civil works employees and to have them simply rake up falling leaves and do again what has already been

well done," he contended.<sup>12</sup>

In general, though, Freeman found little to criticize during the first nine months of the New Deal. Near the end of 1933, he did give voice to two complaints against the new administration. The more serious of these concerned Roosevelt's experiments with the currency. Following the reasoning of Professor George Warren, who argued that if gold prices were raised, the price of other commodities would rise proportionately, Roosevelt sought to purchase quantities of gold on the international market and cut the gold content of the dollar. Freeman had never approved of currency manipulation, and he was especially concerned about the international ramifications of this gold-purchasing plan. "We find it difficult to escape the conclusion that this bold extension of the president's policy will involve a great gold war before there can be American victory in the stabilization of exchange and the rise of world prices, the two necessary preliminaries to the commodity dollar," he wrote. Cooperation could prevent international friction and destroy animosities. On the other hand, "cold-blooded economic nationalism" meant not only a gold war but "ultimately, diplomatic isolation." When Roosevelt's financially conservative advisors balked at the plan, he secured their resignations and soon elevated a

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., March 22, Sept. 11, Sept. 12, Oct. 27, Oct. 28, Nov. 20, 1933.

known advocate of the "commodity dollar," Henry Morgenthau, Jr., to head the Treasury Department. Freeman wrote in the News Leader that "Mr. Roosevelt financially has 'turned left.'" On the same day, he wired Virginia Senator Carter Glass urging Glass to speak out against the plan. "It looks as if our friend is determined to drive all sound money men from the treasury and is embracing the whole creed of Professor Warren," he told Senator Glass. "We think here that the country should be warned of the implications of the policy and we know of nobody who can sound that warning as effectively as yourself." When Roosevelt denounced Glass and other critics of his gold-purchase policy as "Tories," Freeman retorted: "If they be 'Tories' who have had the hardihood to call attention to these ominous conditions, then the country needs more Tories." For all of his avowed liberalism, "left-wing" financial policy was not a part of his political faith.<sup>14</sup>

Less ominous but no less exasperating was the conduct of General Hugh S. Johnson as head of NRA. The major disagreement with Johnson came over the licensing of newspapers under NRA codes. To Freeman the issue was not one of wages or hours but one of freedom of expression. "For some undisclosed reason, General Johnson has so far refused to allow the press to insert in the final code the

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Oct. 30, Oct. 31, Nov. 16, Nov. 20, 1933; DSF to Carter Glass, Nov. 16, 1933, DSFP-LC, Box 17; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 430.

statement that acceptance of this code in no way waives the constitutional guarantees of free speech," he wrote. "Why the general should back and fill over this simple clause is not clear, but it is clear that the insistence by the press on this provision is not quibbling." Johnson's imperious manner also irritated him. Stewart Bryan, as a member of the code committee of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, had the opportunity to witness the general's behavior first-hand. In his biography of Bryan, Freeman wrote that his boss "was often in Washington anterooms for hours on hours until General Johnson or some deputy would see the committeemen." Freeman admitted there were exceptions but recalled that "in general, if a functionary was not belligerent, he was suspicious; and if he did not regard the publishers as culprits, he treated them as petitioners for bounty." Nevertheless, his evaluation of NRA in November of 1933 stressed the positive aspects of the experiment. It had put 3,000,000 people back to work and produced other gains that were of immediate benefit and possibly of permanent advantage. Much of the dissatisfaction with NRA had come about because General Johnson and others had promised too much. NRA was no panacea, but it had established a beachhead from which to launch further assaults on the depression. "No man must expect NRA to do more than to wrest from the enemy the front-line trenches," Freeman counselled. "The American



people must consolidate the ground they have won under the recovery act and, neither magnifying nor minimizing the possibilities of that law, must continue to press on in common sacrifice and united effort."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Freeman continued to sound a positive note in his overall assessment of President Roosevelt's performance during 1933. At the end of August, he wrote to a friend in Australia that Roosevelt "doubtless will make mistakes and if he embarks on deflation or inflation of the currency may lead us into dark passages, but he has sagacity as well as courage and I do not think will carry us to extremes." On the first anniversary of FDR's election, the editor presented this public evaluation:

No president has faced so great an economic crisis with more of courage, of candor, or of determination. Never in this generation has the presidency been brought so close to the people, and never have great powers been so honestly exercised for the welfare of the man in the streets. Opposition will grow, but honor will grow with opposition.<sup>16</sup>

The News Leader continued its support of the New Deal in 1934. After FDR abandoned his pursuit of the commodity dollar, Freeman conceded the need to devalue the currency. He even admitted that the CWA had accomplished much good by putting men to work during the winter. When Roosevelt suspended the program in March, Freeman agreed that the move

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<sup>15</sup>NL, Oct. 30, Nov. 7, 1933; DSF, "John Stewart Bryan," 482-83.

<sup>16</sup>DSF to Newton Wanliss, Aug. 30, 1933, DSFP-LC, Box 20; NL, Nov. 7, 1933.

was necessary "to sift out the grafters from the needy, but it means that some 10,000,000 American workers do not know where next week's bread is to be found." He confessed that the \$600,000,000 spent on CWA had stimulated the retail trade and thus might have been partly responsible for an upturn in the economy. Moreover, in Richmond at least, CWA projects had proved to be distinctly worthwhile to the community. The News Leader had supported the CCC since its inception, and Freeman continued to laud the program for rescuing young men from "the temptation to crime and idleness" and boosting their morale and their ideal of citizenship. He continued to support NRA and to warn businessmen that failure to cooperate with NRA code-making would only result in more governmental control. He feared that NRA was falling because it had in fact become "SRA -- self-recovery act; and every class in America has looked to the law solely to see how self-interest, self-aggrandizement, could be promoted by it." He endorsed Roosevelt's measures to regulate the stock exchange as "a purging rather than a thrashing," but again he feared that selfishness might frustrate FDR's program. The stock exchange, he told Stewart Bryan, "is slow to learn, slow to forgive and slow to surrender any of the autocratic power it

so long has exercised."<sup>17</sup>

Freeman still voiced some complaints about the New Deal. He was still apprehensive of extravagant federal spending and regretted that Congress reduced the income tax on the lower brackets. He believed that Congressional extravagance would stop only when the average man felt the effects of it. "Taxation never excites until it bites," he maintained. He continued his criticism of Hugh Johnson's administration of NRA. "General Johnson continues to run around the country and make a speech to anyone who will listen," he wrote Stewart Bryan, "but his utterances are so extravagant and his manner so bombastic that I think he is really doing the country much good in that he is completing his own discredit." Johnson soon proved him right and was forced out by FDR. Overall, Freeman was critical of the administration of the New Deal. He felt that so many "independent offices" operated directly under the president that the chief executive could not possibly supervise their administration. He urged specifically that PWA and CWA share more of their administrative authority with the states.<sup>18</sup>

Yet throughout 1934, Freeman continued to take a

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., March 29, April 2, April 12, July 9, Nov. 13, 1934; DSF, Convocation Address, University of Richmond, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 130; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, Feb. 12, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 21.

<sup>18</sup>NL, April 12, April 24, July 12, 1934; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, July 18, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 21; DSF to D. R. Hunt, April 28, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 23.

practical approach to the New Deal. He favored giving the Bankhead cotton bill, the country's "greatest experiment in controlled production," a try. "If that does not succeed, something else must be tried," he contended. "At the moment, who has anything better to offer?" In general, he demanded to know what "old deal" Roosevelt's harshest critics would substitute for the New Deal. "Abuse is no substitute for policy," he argued. As the Congressional elections of 1934 approached, he praised Roosevelt for pursuing a path down "the middle of a road that trends very gradually to the left." During the first two years of the Roosevelt administration, Freeman had tried to accommodate his personal values of thrift and individual sacrifice to changing economic conditions and new methods of dealing with them. Only when Roosevelt, armed with an increased majority in Congress, began to follow what Freeman regarded as a sharp turn to the left would the Virginian's more conservative instincts finally rebel and cause him to part company with the New Dealers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>NL, April 24, Nov. 5, 1934; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 420-21.



Keeping the Faith:  
Douglas Southall Freeman,  
1886-1953

Volume II

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## CHAPTER X

### KEEPING COMPANY WITH A GENTLEMAN

Whenever Douglas Freeman sought relief from the rigors of newspaper work, he could find it in several places. The first was the comfort of his own home. Douglas and Inez lived several years in a townhouse at 1108 Floyd Avenue. After Douglas' library grew too large for this residence, the Freemans moved to a large Georgian dwelling at 806 Westover Road, in William Byrd Park. The Freeman family also grew. Inez gave birth to the couple's first child, Mary Tyler, on April 6, 1917, the day the United States entered the war against Germany. A second daughter, Anne Ballard, was born in 1923 and a son, James Douglas, two years later. Walker Freeman also lived with Inez and Douglas. The skill with which Inez Freeman managed this household of six was perhaps her greatest contribution to her husband's career. Inez taught the children to play quietly while indoors so as not to disturb their father as he worked in his spartan study on the third floor. Yet Douglas was not an aloof parent. He was always available to his children when they wanted to talk or share a laugh. Despite his lack of interest in a teaching career, he was a born teacher and enjoyed sharing his knowledge and enthusiasms with his children. He loved music and gave four-year-old Mary Tyler a Victrola with records of French

and English songs and Strauss waltzes. His tastes in art tended toward the European masters, and he framed reproductions of his favorite paintings for his children's rooms. He had his favorite of all, Vermeer's The Distant View of Delft, reproduced by a good copyist and hung in the family's dining room. He was fascinated by astronomy, and during summer weekends at the beach, he had a large telescope mounted on the upstairs porch of the family cottage so that he could teach the children about the wonders of the heavens. The beach also provided the opportunity for his favorite recreational activities, swimming and sailing. Most of all, he sought to impart to his children four rules by which he tried to live his own life:

1. Self-control is the first law of life.
2. Tell the truth no matter what happens: nothing can be so bad as a lie.
3. Never be afraid of anything except doing wrong.
4. Never waste today what you may need tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

Besides his family, a variety of community activities provided an outlet for Freeman's abundant energies. Some of these, such as his News Leader Current Events Class and his daily news broadcasts over Richmond station WRVA, were

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<sup>1</sup>Edmunds, Virginians Out Front, 389-90; Earl Sowers, "Supplementary Biographical Data on Douglas Southall Freeman," [typescript, 1935], DSFP-LC, Box 30; DSF to Ralph A. Habas, March 30, 1945, DSFP-LC, Box 62; Cheek, "Reflections," 31-34; Anne B. Freeman, "The Bedford Freemans," quoted in Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 182.



closely associated with his job as editor of the News Leader. Others gave him an opportunity to lead by actions as well as by words. No cause interested him more than did education. One of his favorite charitable activities was providing money for needy students to attend college. In 1930 he and several members of the Current Events Class formed an organization for that purpose, the Student Self Help Society. In 1925 he was elected to the Board of Trustees at his alma mater, the University of Richmond. In the late Twenties and early Thirties, he was briefly considered for at least three college presidencies, those of Auburn, Washington and Lee and the University of Virginia. He was increasingly in demand as a speaker at colleges and elsewhere. In 1920 alone, he delivered 104 addresses in addition to 50 Sunday school lessons and 49 Monday meetings of the News Leader Current Events Class. In a letter written in January, 1921, he described a monthly schedule of engagements that was by no means atypical:

Monday, January 10th, I had my regular Monday night class, known as The News Leader Current Events Class; Tuesday, the 11th, I had to speak at the Classical Study association of Westhampton College at 7 o'clock; tonight I have a class that meets weekly in English literature; January 13th I speak at Highland Park at 8 o'clock; Friday night I have open; Saturday I have the annual meeting of my Bible Class; Sunday at 11 o'clock I have to preach; Monday, January 17th, I have my class; Tuesday, January 18th, I speak before the Richmond Typothetae; Wednesday night, January 19th, I speak in Winchester; Thursday and Friday, January 20th and 21st, I shall be absent from the city; Sunday, the 23rd, I have

to preach at 8 o'clock at night; Monday night, January 24th, I have my class; Tuesday, January 25th, I have to attend a farewell dinner to a friend who is to be married; Wednesday, the 26th, I have my class; Thursday, the 27th, I speak at the R. E. Lee School.

In addition to a steady diet of these activities, Freeman took three trips to Europe, in 1926, 1928 and 1929.<sup>2</sup>

Yet no activities aroused as much enthusiasm in Freeman as did those dedicated to preserving the memory of the Civil War. The history of the war was much more than just an escape for him because it influenced his thinking on many contemporary issues. Indeed, one historian has called Freeman's use of the Civil War as inspiration "the key to his editorial approach." Freeman himself insisted that Virginia's "history must be for inspiration rather than for contemplation." Virginians could find inspiration in many eras of their storied past, as Freeman reminded his listeners when he delivered an address at the State Capitol on the tercentenary of the first meeting of the General Assembly of Virginia:

Great crises Virginia has met with plain acts of unabashed manliness. She led the continent because she had faith in herself, faith in her

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<sup>2</sup>DSF to Louise Haley, Jan. 28, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 6, "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, March 3, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 176; B. West Tabb to DSF, June 15, 1925, DSFP-LC, Box 8; DSF to W. C. Griggs, March 10 and March 22, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 11; Giles Buckner Cooke to DSF, Dec. 13, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 10; DSF to Francis Pendleton Gaines, June 5, 1933, DSFP-LC, Box 17; Diary of DSF, Dec. 31, 1920, DSFP-LC; DSF to Howard D. Bryant, Jan. 12, 1921, DSFP-LC, Box 5.

citizens, faith in her ideals. Like works must be the fruit of like faith. As we Virginians do not go to the storied shrines of the past to do worship, but rather to gain inspiration, we would seek that faith afresh today in a return to the virile and lofty principles of the great morning of our liberties. Without that faith, we walk into an unknown night of word-befogged, strange formulas. With that faith we march into an assured day of new achievements, cheered by the familiar sun of old Justice.

But Freeman left little doubt that the period of the War Between the States offered the greatest inspiration to later generations of Virginians. This was particularly true for Richmond, a city made unique in America by its experiences of 1861-1865. Richmond's history before the war, Freeman asserted, was "surprisingly infertile" and "colorless." Even the city's postbellum history had been rather inconspicuous. Freeman praised the Confederate veterans for their long struggle to rebuild after the war but lamented that until the turn of the century "we marked history here in the South by the funerals of great men, and by the erection of monuments to them." In short, he said, "the greatness of Richmond, is bound up in the Confederacy. It is impossible to think of this city as world-famous save as the Capital of the Confederacy. It is impossible that we could think of Richmond as a great city or that we could be ourselves, had not Richmond been a city set on a hill, the target, for four years, of all the onslaughts of the Federals." Primarily because of the Civil War, "Richmond is different. Virginia is different."

You may cross the Potomac River, Southward bound, and just as soon as you do, you become aware of the peculiar quality of our life. It is consideration, it is gentleness, it is a reverence for the past, it is a respect for elders; it is, in some, what might be called the developed historical sense. Our Southern fathers made up an 'Army of Gentlemen.' They lived the tradition of gentlemen, by which all of us are enriched -- enriched beyond measure. There is not today any man ever born in the South who is not the gentler, the more considerate, the more loyal to truth, the broader of vision because he has the background of the Southern Confederacy.<sup>2</sup>

The commemorative activities of the Confederate celebration thus had real value as long as they inspired younger Southerners to emulate their noble fathers. Freeman himself was inspired by them and sought through his editorials, his speeches and his historical writings to inspire others. An address by him at any event associated with Richmond's remembrance of the Civil War became almost mandatory. The News Leader gave notice to anniversaries of the war's important events and birthdays of the South's great leaders as well as eulogies for departed Confederate veterans. As Walker Freeman moved up the chain of command of the United Confederate Veterans, Douglas became more involved with the activities of that organization. He addressed the veterans personally when they held their

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<sup>2</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 279; DSF, "Virginia: A Gentle Dominion," 71; DSF, "The Tercentenary of Representative Government in America," July 30, 1919, DSFP-LC, Box 126, p. 20; DSF, "The Battlefields Around Richmond," Stars and Bars: An American Magazine of Understanding (April, 1925).

reunions in Richmond and wrote the address that his father delivered as commander-in-chief of the UCV at the reunion of 1926 in Birmingham. When the aged veterans held their last reunion in Richmond in 1932, Freeman celebrated the event with an almost poetic editorial that was later published in a limited-edition volume containing photographs of the statues on Monument Avenue. The closing lines of this editorial said much about Freeman's view that a proud past could inspire hope for the future:

Today the city has its last review. The armies of the South will march our streets no more. It is the rear guard, engaged with death, that passes now. Who that remembers other days can face that truth and still withhold his tears? The dreams of youth have faded in the twilight of the years. The deeds that shook a continent belong to history. Farewell; sound taps! And then a generation new must face its battles in its turn, forever heartened by that heritage.\*

One of Freeman's major contributions toward keeping alive the memory of the war was his leadership in the campaign to preserve and mark the battlefields around Richmond. The movement to mark the battlefields grew out of the Richmond Rotary Club, to which Freeman belonged in the early 1920s. An organization known as the Richmond Battlefield Markers Association was formed, with its officers all coming from the original Rotary Club committee. Of approximately 75 markers, Freeman wrote over 60 of the

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\*Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 264-65; Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 20, 1926; DSF, The Last Parade (Richmond, 1932).

inscriptions and personally located at least 50 of the sites. He conducted numerous battlefield tours during the Twenties and counted such notables as David Lloyd George, Ferdinand Foch and Winston Churchill among his guests. During one of these tours, Freeman and a group of prominent Richmonders conceived the idea of purchasing the fields of valor. They formed the Richmond Battlefield Parks Corporation, which negotiated to buy the fields from their owners. Richmond architect James Ambler Johnston, the secretary-treasurer of the corporation and a close friend of Freeman, remembered that it would require "a volume to recount ... all the conferences, negotiations, travel, speeches and all the work resulting in the purchase by this Corporation of these fields." No one contributed more to the movement than did Freeman, who saw it as a duty to the future even more than to the past. "We are going to perpetuate, please God, the bravest story ever written on American soil," he told a meeting of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1925.

It is to be perpetuated, not for the glory of those who did it, and not alone for the glory of those who fought, nor even solely for the glory of the great army to which they belonged. It is to be done in order that the generations that come after will know that we had sense enough to revere American history. It will be done to perpetuate forever those sites where duty found its noblest expression, and heroism was at its flower. More than that, we seek to preserve these memorials because they have made us what we are.

Such eloquence helped to win support, both moral and

financial, for the Battlefield Parks Corporation, which eventually gave the fields to the Commonwealth of Virginia. The commonwealth later gave them to the United States National Park Service. In Ambler Johnston's view, Freeman almost single-handedly kept memories of the Civil War alive in Virginia. "Some people were saying, 'Aw, forget it!'" Johnston recalled. "He changed that."<sup>2</sup>

Though not visible to the public for many years, the greatest of all Freeman's contributions to keeping alive remembrance of the war was his monumental biography of General Robert Edward Lee. If he found much in the history of the Civil War to inspire his fellow Southerners, he continued to find his greatest personal inspiration in the life of Lee. As his father's faithful son and a faithful student of John Peyton McGuire and Samuel Chiles Mitchell, Freeman had grown up with Lee as his exemplar. He had always believed a man needed heroes and should seek to emulate them. "Have an Ideal!" he told his Men's Bible Class in 1924. "Have an Ideal! That we lack more than anything else. That it is more than all else, I think, that lifts a man. . . . The trouble with us is not that we lack ideals, but that sometimes we fail to return daily to that ideal. I believe in a man having in his room, in his

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<sup>2</sup>[J. Ambler Johnston], untitled typed MS statement, n. d., DSFP-LC, Box 123; DSF, "Battlefields Around Richmond"; J. Ambler Johnston quoted in Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 265.

office, in his home, the pictures of those men who are his ideals." Practicing what he preached, Freeman had a portrait of Lee in his home. And on his daily trips to the News Leader offices, he never failed to salute Lee's statue as he passed it on Monument Avenue. That a young man coming of age in early 20th-century Richmond should have had General Lee for an ideal was anything but unique. In fact, it was almost required. Yet by making the most of the opportunities offered him, Douglas Freeman was in a unique position to assure Lee's fame for the ages.<sup>4</sup>

The original contract with Charles Scribner's Sons for a Lee biography presented no spectacular opportunity in itself. The book, it will be recalled, was to be a 75,000-word volume in Scribner's "American Crisis Series." Agreeing to terms with Scribner's editor-in-chief E. L. Burlingame in 1915, Freeman had estimated that completion of the work would take two years. In January, 1918, Mr. Burlingame wrote to inquire how the project was progressing. "I have very carefully refrained from troubling you with inquiries; for although the dates we at first discussed have been for some time passed, my experience has been that these things always outgrow one's most careful estimates, and I have known that you would devote all the time you could spare to the work," he told Freeman. Other

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<sup>4</sup>DSF, "Batting Averages" (typed transcript, Dec. 7, 1924), DSFP-LC, Box 126; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 276-77.



conditions, mostly related to the war in Europe, had worked to delay the launching of the series. Yet several of the volumes were now completed and others were soon to follow, so Burlingame hoped that Freeman could give a close estimate as to when the Lee volume would be finished. Freeman wrote back that all of the research was done and that the manuscript was virtually complete except for "polishing up the English." He feared that his prose would never be as good as he wanted it to be and wanted to hold the manuscript until Burlingame told him to send it. Still, he expressed no doubt that he could deliver the finished product "at almost any time you may set after April." Burlingame penned a polite reply and did not trouble the young writer again until May 10, when he wrote: "I feel sure that this will find you in readiness, although, as you say, one likes to keep such a careful piece of work by him until it is really needed." When more than a month passed with no reply from Freeman, Mr. Burlingame sent a tactful reminder. "I have not heard from you," he wrote, "which may mean that you have been giving it some last touches that required more time than you expected; but I know you will not think me too urgent under the circumstances if I write again to ask about it." Two weeks later Freeman finally answered that he had been delayed by two major difficulties. "The first," he explained, "is to compress it into one hundred thousand words; the second is to keep up with the constant mass of

new material I am gathering." Burlingame responded sympathetically, but he expressed some impatience and some alarm at Freeman's reference to "cutting" the manuscript to a hundred thousand words. He reminded Freeman that their original negotiations were for a book of "about seventy-five thousand" and feared that a volume even slightly greater in length would be too expensive to sell in large quantities.<sup>7</sup>

And so the correspondence ran for several years. Burlingame implored Freeman not to think of him "as a persecutor in the matter of the Lee biography," but he continued to prod the writer to send in the manuscript. Freeman wrote to his editor in December, 1918 explaining that the demands of the world war had left him shorthanded at the newspaper office and that to compound his problems, the News Leader's plant had burned two days after the Armistice. Despite these major distractions, he reported that he had "written it all -- most of it twice." He had now completed the final revision through the Battle of Gettysburg and saw "no reason why it should not be in your hands on February the first." February came and went -- then March, April and May. On June 5, 1919, Burlingame decided to try again. "Since your last letter with its explanation of the unavoidable matters that had delayed your work," he wrote, "I have felt, as before, that the most

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<sup>7</sup>E. L. Burlingame to DSF, Jan. 5, Jan. 19, May 10, June 25, July 11, 1918 and DSF to Burlingame, Jan. 15, July 8, 1918, all in DSFP-LC, Box 5.

considerate way to help you was not to disturb you with too frequent inquiries; but I am afraid that another limit of time is nearly reached, beyond which delay would be equivalent to a whole season's postponement, and that I must ask you if you cannot possibly let us have the manuscript before this happens." Freeman replied with a long letter that contained the usual explanations and promises but also elaborated upon the work. He explained that he had "laid as much emphasis as seems practical in the biography upon the military biography of Lee's campaigns" and had "sought throughout to lay chief emphasis upon the strategy that preceeded the battles." He also explained that he had "sought to maintain a single point of view and to describe the battles on a basis of what Lee knew rather than on a basis of what we now know." This device became known as the "fog of war" technique. Burlingame expressed satisfaction with Freeman's description of the work but confessed that he "could not help being disappointed when your letter of the 13th, received a day or two ago, was not able to fix a definite early date for our receiving the manuscript." He did not bother the author again until the late summer of 1920, when he inquired succinctly: "What news can you give me of the Lee biography? I do not like to think that the series is going on so long without it." This time Freeman wrote back with the explanation that he was now delaying in hopes of gaining access to Lee's private letters to his

family, "the last important unpublished correspondence of Lee." Perhaps despairing of receiving anything from Freeman, Burlingame left on an extended vacation in the spring of 1921. In his absence, Maxwell Evarts Perkins wrote to Freeman to inquire about the biography of Lee. "Replying to your letter of June 10th," Freeman told Mr. Perkins, "I beg to say that I am now working on the final draft of the Lee book and as soon as I can I will give you notice, approximately two months in advance, as to when the copy will be ready."<sup>2</sup>

In December, 1922, E. L. Burlingame went to his reward without ever having seen a page of the long-awaited biography of Robert E. Lee. Max Perkins succeeded him as editor-in-chief and immediately set out to discover the status of Freeman's work. He even offered to come to Richmond to discuss the project with the writer. Freeman extended no invitation but explained to Perkins that he was "waiting to have a view of the final cache of Lee papers soon to be deposited by the heirs of Colonel Robert E. Lee in the Confederate Memorial Institute." He added that he was "very much handicapped by the fact that you want a hundred-thousand-word book." He promised to deliver a work of that length but warned "that after this little book is on

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<sup>2</sup>E. L. Burlingame to DSF, Dec. 18, 1918, June 5, June 21, 1919, Sept. 17, 1920, and DSF to Burlingame, Dec. 19, 1918, June 15, 1919, Sept. 28, 1920, all in DSFP-LC, Box 5; M. E. Perkins to DSF, June 10, 1921 and DSF to Perkins, June 14, 1921, both in DSFP-LC, Box 7.

the market and has sold as well as there is reason to believe it will, I am going to offer you a larger, perhaps two-volume, life of Lee, that will be as nearly final as existing material permits." He concluded with an expression of sadness over Mr. Burlingame's death. "He was a very patient man in dealing with me," he told Perkins. "I hope a like mantle covers your shoulders." Perkins needed the heaviest cloak of patience he could find, but he realized that he had in Freeman an author who had much more in mind than a small volume in a series of biographies. On February 3, 1923, he wrote to Freeman and suggested that the original concept be abandoned in favor of a more ambitious life of Lee. "May we not, therefore, look forward to the idea of publishing a really large and definitive life of Lee by you?" he asked. "The question of one or two volumes would depend on the extent of the material, etc., -- would depend, in short, simply on what would be its best form in view of its extent and nature." Freeman responded favorably but left some doubt in Perkins' mind that he fully understood the editor's proposal. Perkins reiterated that he now envisioned publishing a definitive biography quite apart from the series. "Just how this would affect the question of the smaller life in the end, it would be hard to say, but certainly the larger life should be published first," he

wrote.<sup>9</sup>

Now began anew the friendly but protracted struggle between anxious editor and meticulous writer. In many ways, Perkins was even more polite than Burlingame had been, but he kept up a steady flow of prodding correspondence. Freeman later recalled that "at a time when I was lagging in my work on 'R. E. Lee,' he would spur me diplomatically with gracious letters. Always he kept the subject in his mind and apparently, on occasion, thought of me." Several times during 1923 and 1924 Perkins asked Freeman to send him a portion of his manuscript, but the reluctant author never complied, despite Perkins' assurances that seeing material in its roughest form was "all in a day's work with me." Perkins professed a personal, as well as a professional, interest in the Lee biography. "As to a great many of the 'damned Yankees' Lee has always been a fascinating figure to me, -- more so than anyone of that period," he wrote. "So I am especially eager to see the book come out." Yet no appeal, personal or professional, could pry even a piece of the growing manuscript from Freeman's hands. He continued to refuse Perkins' requests on the grounds of the crudeness of his prose and the immensity of new material he was uncovering. Most of this new material concerned Lee's life before the Civil War and presented a more personal side

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<sup>9</sup>M. E. Perkins to DSF, Jan. 22, Feb. 3, Feb. 7, 1923 and DSF to Perkins, Feb. 1, Feb. 5, Feb. 12, 1923, all in DSFP-LC, Box 7.

to the great man than had previously appeared. Freeman was determined to portray Lee as "essentially human" because there "is and always has been danger that he would be idolized until he ceased to appeal." Freeman wanted a hero, but a humanized hero.<sup>10</sup>

It was this desire to paint a more human portrait of Lee that led to Freeman's first publication from his research on the General's life. This was a two-part article entitled "Lee and the Ladies" that appeared in the October and November, 1925 issues of Scribner's Magazine. The article consisted of previously unpublished letters written by Lee to various correspondents, most of whom were female relatives or friends. Though the letters revealed no improprieties, they did reveal a man of good-natured humor and compassion who enjoyed nothing more than the company of good and charming young ladies. Freeman's role in "Lee and the Ladies" was still primarily that of an editor rather than a biographer. He explained the context in which the letters were written and provided introductory and concluding commentary. Yet the reactions to even so brief a publication as this demonstrated the delicate nature of writing the life of an idol. The editor of a Virginia weekly applauded the article and praised its author for

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<sup>10</sup>DSF to John Poyntz Tyler, Oct. 18, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 58; M. E. Perkins to DSF, April 26, July 2, Aug. 22, Sept. 14, Nov. 13, Nov. 19, 1923, Jan. 16, March 13, 1924 and DSF to Perkins, April 28, Sept. 13, 1923, Jan. 18, March 14, Nov. 21, Dec. 8, 1924, April 15, June 29, 1925, all in DSFP-LC, Box 7.

being "modern without the slightest hint of the maudlin sillimentality of our Jazz era; he displays brains of the 1925 model yet free from dadalism, cubism, or any other of the isms, insanities and inanities of our time." But a relative of General Lee expressed displeasure at Freeman's references to the General's father, "Lighthorse Harry" Lee. Freeman had related two apocryphal stories about Henry Lee's shady financial dealings and also made a brief reference to his alleged love affairs. In a private letter, he apologized for his "casual and perhaps unfortunate reference to General Harry Lee" and denied any intention to "muckrake in the history of the Lee family" or any disposition to "dig in scandal or to magnify its place in the life of the greatest of American families -- a family for which I have the greatest reverence."<sup>11</sup>

Getting something into print did not speed completion of the biography. Early in 1926, Perkins sent another of his gracious reminders to Freeman. "Could you tell me how you are getting on with the Lee biography?" he asked. "I have with some difficulty refrained from bothering you for a long time because our interest is great." This time Freeman replied that after "five months of dally toll I have put in nearly final shape that part of the book covering General Lee's activities from the beginning of January, 1865, to the

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<sup>11</sup>DSF, "Lee and the Ladies," Scribner's Magazine (Oct., Nov., 1925), 338-49, 459-71; Crawford's Weekly, Oct. 10, 1925; DSF to G. T. Lee, Nov. 20, 1925, DSFP-LC, Box 7.



end of the war." He promised to send this portion of the manuscript to Perkins for a critique by the end of February, but there is no evidence in his papers that he did so at this time. Yet later in 1926, Freeman decided to embark on the writing schedule for which he later became famous. He resolved to spend a minimum of 14 hours per week on his historical writing and to keep careful records of the time devoted to it. Just what spurred him to this decision at this particular time is unclear. Perhaps it was the realization that a faster pace was necessary if he were ever to see the project through to completion. He turned 40 in 1926, and in the winter of that year, just prior to his first trip overseas, he suffered an attack of influenza. He left instructions providing, in the event of his death, for the publication of the chapters covering the last winter of the war and the Appomattox Campaign. Whatever the motivation behind his decision, Freeman never again devoted less than 14 hours a week to the Lee biography except when prostrated by illness in 1929 or when out of the country. Gradually he increased the minimum requirement to 24 hours per week. Often he spent much more than the minimum on the work and carried over the extra hours to erase deficits during those infrequent weeks when they occurred. The biography, while still very much a labor of love, had in

effect become a second career.<sup>12</sup>

Still, Freeman would not be hurried. He and his research assistants continued to unearth vast stores of new material. In February, 1927, Perkins wrote to Freeman: "I can easily understand how the appearance of new material all the time interferes, and how you feel about new material, but I think it is possible to exaggerate the value of new material, unless it is of a very important kind." He suggested publishing the book in the fall and using any more new material in later editions. He argued that "tactically that is good policy" and "tends always to renew interest in a book." Yet all this was to no avail. Freeman replied on February 9: "I wish I could say yes to your inquiry whether there is any chance of printing this fall, but the simple truth is, every time we turn to some new phase of General Lee's career, we are simply overwhelmed by the new material we find." A year later Perkins tried again. This time Freeman responded: "The material is so abundant that if I attempted to finish all for publication this fall, I would either disappoint you or slight the work and I am not going to do either." He did finally send Perkins a portion of the manuscript for review. This portion covered Lee's life

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<sup>12</sup>M. E. Perkins to DSF, Jan. 16, 1926 and DSF to Perkins, Jan. 18, 1926, both in DSFP-LC, Box 7; Dumas Malone, "The Pen of Douglas Southall Freeman," in DSF, George Washington: A Biography, 6 vols. (New York, 1948-54), VI, xvii-xviii; Archer G. Jones to DSF, March 26, 1926 and W. E. Baskerville to DSF, March 26, 1926, both in DSFP-LC, Box 3.

after the war and amounted to 118,000 words. The editor confessed his initial shock at its length but concluded that the "great amount of really new material" warranted it. "I suppose the whole work will be not less than 500,000 words, but it will be the Life of Robert E. Lee," Perkins continued. He praised the work as "very good indeed" and wished "we could get to the time when we might publish it." But that time had not yet come.<sup>12</sup>

Freeman did publish another preview of his Lee biography in the autumn of 1928. This took the form of a reply to Elbridge Colby's criticisms of Lee's generalship in the October, 1928 issue of Current History. Published together under the title "Robert E. Lee: Is His Military Genius Fact or Fiction?", Colby's critique and Freeman's rebuttal presented an overview of the questions surrounding Lee's performance as a commander. Colby, a captain in the United States Army, did not question Lee's military skill but argued that he lacked the requisite "military character" to be ranked with the great commanders of history. Captain Colby cited as prime examples of Lee's lack of military character his failure to impose strict discipline on his troops, his "extreme deference" to Jefferson Davis and his failure to control, and when necessary to replace, unruly subordinates. "Skilled strategist and tactician he might

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<sup>12</sup>M. E. Perkins to DSF, Feb. 7, 1927, Jan. 23, April 23, 1928 and DSF to Perkins, Feb. 9, 1927, Jan. 25, 1928, all in DSFP-LC, Box 13.

be," Colby wrote of Lee, "a gracious, lovable and scholarly officer and gentleman. But he was not a great commander." Freeman's essay focused on the tremendous handicaps Lee faced as commander of an army that was long on individualism and short on manpower, trained leaders, resources, equipment and money. He argued that Lee could not remove subordinates from command, even if their conduct merited doing so, because he simply had no one better to take their place. "He could not chop off a head, as Grant or Pershing could, with reasonable assurance that the man he promoted was as good as the man he relieved," Freeman wrote. This explained why Lee did not relieve James Longstreet after that general's alleged failures at Second Manassas and Gettysburg. Freeman did commend Captain Colby for his denunciation of the "Lee legend." Indeed it was the human Lee struggling within himself, not the "superman" of legend, that he sought to hold up as an ideal. "Youth would lose inspiration if he were portrayed as always so self-contained, and so surely the master of himself that his decisions and self-restraint represented no inward battle," Freeman maintained. "For character means as much to history as military genius, even that of the 'hard-boiled, dominating type' that Captain Colby lauds." Yet Freeman left no doubt that he regarded Lee as one of the great captains of history as well as a model of character. After a brief review of Lee's accomplishments during the war, he

concluded: "Let history Judge whether, as Captain Colby affirms, this was the work of a man lacking in discipline, lacking 'In the nervous power' to 'drive his blows home' and lacking 'In the decisive will power to impress the will of the commander upon the rank and file,' 'not a strong man like Pershing.'"<sup>14</sup>

By the end of 1929, Freeman had covered Lee's life from birth until 1858 and from the beginning of 1865 until his death. This represented a mighty accomplishment but left the bulk of the war years still unfinished. Freeman estimated that he might have to spend a full six months on Gettysburg alone. In the spring of 1930, he sent the eager Mr. Perkins a draft of the first volume of what he now envisioned as a three-volume biography. This volume covered Lee's life up to April, 1861 and was entitled "The Preparation of Robert E. Lee." In a typed note to Perkins, Freeman outlined the volume's contents, method, materials and major findings. He emphasized again the new sources he had uncovered and listed several of the new discoveries about Lee's early life and career that he had derived from them. He also emphasized the fact that he had "tried to get rid of that terrible first chapter on ancestry that destroys most readers' appetite for biography." He had chosen

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<sup>14</sup>Elbridge Colby and DSF, "Robert E. Lee: Is His Military Genius Fact or Fiction?" Current History (Oct., 1928), 36-47.

Instead to discuss Lee's ancestry and family history "not in preliminary chapters, but where these things directly touched the life of Lee." Perkins agreed wholeheartedly with this decision and considered the volume as a whole to be "a very fine piece of work." He turned the manuscript over to another Scribner's editor, Wallace Meyer, for a critical reading. Meyer, with whom Freeman was to work closely for nearly a quarter of a century, was also impressed but feared that the first part of the narrative moved too slowly. Freeman concurred but saw no way to enliven it except by reducing the compass, "and I do not know whether we ought to do that in view of the fact that nine-tenths of the material contained in the first volume is entirely new." The best plan now seemed to be to issue the biography in four volumes and to withhold the first volume until the second, more exciting, volume could be published with it.<sup>15</sup>

Freeman continued to work diligently on the biography through 1931 and 1932. At last, on Lee's 126th birthday, January 19, 1933, he wired Mr. Perkins: "I am vain enough to believe that you will rejoice with me when I tell you I yesterday completed the text of the Lee. Only literary

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<sup>15</sup>DSF to D. F. Houston, Dec. 9, 1929, DSFP-LC, Box 11; DSF, "A Note for Mr. Maxwell Perkins" (typed MS, 1930), DSFP-LC, Box 12; M. E. Perkins to DSF, April 23, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 13; Perkins to DSF, including typed statement by Wallace Meyer, June 27, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 25; DSF to Perkins, July 1, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 13.

revision remains." Back came the reply: "Delighted at good news. All here join in congratulating you." The main question now was whether to issue so large and expensive a book in the uncertain economic climate of 1933. "I am quite satisfied that a book as expensive as this could not command a proper market in the south in 1933," Freeman told Perkins in March, "and it is to the south that we must look primarily for its sale." The decision was finally made to publish the first two volumes in the fall of 1934. The final product would reach four volumes and approximately a million words. From the day he began keeping records in 1926 until he completed the text, Freeman had devoted 6100 hours to the Lee biography.<sup>14</sup>

Even as plans for publication were being finalized, Freeman continued his quest for new material. Two collections of Lee letters had thus far escaped him. For several years, he had sought access to the papers in possession of the General's granddaughters, Mrs. Hanson Ely and Mrs. Hunter de Butts. The ladies had refused access on the grounds that they hoped to publish these letters themselves. Finally, late in 1933, they consented to let Freeman examine any of their papers that had been previously published in order that he might check the accuracy of the printed sources. He had no success at all in gaining access

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<sup>14</sup>DSF to M. E. Perkins, Jan. 19, March 6, 1933 and Perkins to DSF, Jan. 19, Dec. 27, 1933, all in DSFP-LC, Box 19; Malone, "Pen of DSF," xviii.

to the papers in possession of Charles Carter Lee. He was deeply disappointed at this, for he believed that they probably contained the fullest explanation of General Lee's strategy.<sup>17</sup>

Freeman devoted almost as much energy to ensuring the book's commercial success as he had to researching and writing it. Prior to the publication of the first two volumes in October, 1934, he sought to line up competent reviewers for his life of Lee. He contacted, among others, Winston Churchill and John Buchan, two prominent Englishmen whom he had accompanied on tours of the Virginia battlefields, the poet Stephen Vincent Benet and Richmond's own Ellen Glasgow. Wallace Meyer admitted that Scribner's would welcome such notable reviewers but warned: "Most of the literary editors in this country are averse to receiving suggestions as to possible reviewers from either publisher or author; they suspect that a favorable review is being 'planted.'" Meyer denied any such suspicion of Freeman's intentions but cautioned him that many publications, especially the New York Times, were "touchy" about the matter. Undaunted, Freeman got Colonel Buchan to agree to review the book for the London Spectator and to "engineer" the choice of the reviewer for the London Times.

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<sup>17</sup>DSF to George Bolling Lee, Nov. 21, 1929, July 22, 1930, DSFP-LC, Box 12; DSF to Mary Custis Lee de Butts, Nov. 15, 1933 and de Butts to DSF, Nov. 20, 1933, both in DSFP-LC, Box 16; C. C. Lee to DSF, Feb. 7, 1933 and DSF to Lee, Feb. 9, 1933, both in DSFP-LC, Box 18.



He wrote directly to Stephen Benet in August: "I may be presumptuously ambitious, but if I am, I hope you will excuse me for saying I could wish nothing finer than to have you pass judgment on the book in the New York Times or the Herald Tribune." Ellen Glasgow declined to review the biography herself, citing "total immersion" in her new novel and her lack of competence to write of the military aspects of his work, but she used her influence with Irita Van Doren to secure Benet as the reviewer for the Herald Tribune. Recruiting Benet paid off, for he wrote an extraordinarily laudatory review that took up the entire front page of the Herald Tribune Books for October 14, 1934. Benet praised R. E. Lee as a "superb achievement" and "a model to future generations of biographers." He declared that Freeman should be awarded "at least ten" Pulitzer prizes and then "chained to a desk" and made to write a biography of George Washington, "whether he wants to or not." Freeman always maintained that Benet's review was largely responsible for the one Pulitzer prize he did receive in 1935. "I feel that your gracious introduction of the Lee to the reading public did more than anything and everything else to create a favorable audience," he wired Benet after the announcement of the Pulitzer award. Yet as important as Benet's contribution was, the biographer probably overrated the importance of the review, for it was only the most glowing

tribute among a host of tributes.<sup>1a</sup>

More important than any review in boosting the book's widespread popularity was the climate of the times. Americans struggling to survive the Great Depression found inspiration in the lives of their forefathers who had met and survived the tests of past crises. Freeman could not have known when he contracted to write a volume for Scribner's American Crisis Series that his massive work would finally appear in the midst of one of America's greatest crises, but he had always found personal inspiration in the life of Lee and sought to impart it to others through his writing. Through the pages of R. E. Lee moved the gallant warrior who had inspired Walker Freeman by his nobility in the face of wartime hardship and, having been finally defeated in war by the overwhelming strength of his opponent, inspired Samuel Chiles Mitchell by devoting the remainder of his life to rebuilding the South through education. Freeman's Lee was a hero for the American Everyman. Freeman made much of the good breeding that produced a man like Lee. "For six generations after the emergence of the Lee family in America there were not more than two or three instances where it could be said that

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<sup>1a</sup>Wallace Meyer to DSF, May 24, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 25; DSF to Ellen Glasgow, Aug. 2, 1934, Glasgow to DSF, Aug. 3, 1934, and [Irita Van Doren] to Glasgow, Aug. 8, 1934, all in DSFP-LC, Box 23; DSF to Stephen Benet, Aug. 2, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 21; DSF to Benet, May 7, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 24; New York Herald Tribune Books, Oct. 14, 1934.

the Lees married persons who were not of equal blood and station with themselves," he stated in a 1935 address. "The result was the steady maintenance of the physical stamina and intellectual vigor of the stock for generations until its perfect flowering in one of the greatest human beings of modern times, Robert E. Lee." Yet Freeman did not intend his portrayal of Lee to be a paean to Virginia's Cavalier aristocracy. The character traits that he admired most in Lee were those of Middle America -- steadiness and moderation in all things, including personality, religion and personal habits. For Freeman, the key to Lee's character was that he possessed the "simple soul" of a gentleman. Yet "gentleman" did not necessarily mean "aristocrat." Indeed, Freeman described Lee's entire army as an "Army of Gentlemen." Though he never stated it explicitly, Freeman's concept of a gentleman embodied as many traditionally middle-class values as aristocratic ones. He regarded the Confederacy's greatest contribution to America to have been the example of "a unity above class." Lee, the greatest Confederate of them all, offered Americans of any class a model of behavior in times of adversity.<sup>19</sup>

Also contributing to the popularity of R. E. Lee were

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<sup>19</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 270-82, passim; Connelly, Marble Man, 157, 161-62; Connelly and Bellows, God and General Longstreet, 89; DSF, "The Cornerstones of Stratford (n.p., 1935), 7; DSF, "The Battlefields Around Richmond"; DSF, "The Confederate Contribution to the Life of the Nation" (typed MS, 1922), DSFP-LC, Box 129.

the considerable writing abilities and keen dramatic sense of its author. Even those who have been critical of many of Freeman's conclusions have praised his literary skills. As one noted critic has observed: "Here was a historian who knew how to write. His passages are marked by grace, clarity, and eloquence. . . . Freeman employed devices that only a literary master knows when and how to use."

Freeman's fine sense of the dramatic stood him in good stead when he came to write of the many stirring and moving episodes in the life of Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. He was at his dramatic best when he wrote the chapters on Appomattox and Lee's death. He prepared to write his chapter on the surrender at Appomattox, "The Ninth of April," by steeping himself in Greek tragedy for three weeks. "I told myself that the incidents of that day made one of the most tragic stories in American history and, at the same time, one of the most perfect," he recalled. "The day had dramatic unity, in the classic sense of the word. If I tried to dress it up, I would certainly ruin it." So, he decided that he could do no better than to emulate the Greek masters, Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus, who, "at the tensest moment of a tragedy, often dropped into the tersest, simplest Greek." The result of this emulation was a simple, straightforward, but highly dramatic rendition of the meeting between Lee and Ulysses S. Grant and the end of the Army of Northern Virginia. Just as he turned to his

favorite Greek tragedians when writing "The Ninth of April," Freeman drew inspiration from his favorite musical composers as he sat down to write of Lee's death. "Through my head ceaselessly, while I was writing of the death of Lee, there ran the music of the entrance of the gods into Valhalla," he remembered. The moving chapter crafted to the strains of Wagner brought tears to the eyes of many readers, Carl Sandburg among them.<sup>20</sup>

Freeman's decision "to give the reader no information beyond that which Lee possessed at a particular moment regarding the strength, movements and plans of his adversary" and even regarding happenings in his own army added to the dramatic effect of the book. This recreation of the "fog of war" was an innovative technique that drew praise from military men. General Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, wrote to Freeman:

By timing the presentation of each pertinent bit of information so as to coincide historically with the moment it was unfolded to Lee himself, you have not only avoided laborious explanations of the fog of war but have actually succeeded in reproducing it. This original technique is so effective in assuring unity of viewpoint between the reader and the Commander of the Army in the field that I expect to see it copied by military biographers of the future.

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas Harry Williams, "Freeman, Historian of the Civil War: An Appraisal," in The Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams (Baton Rouge, 1983), 186; DSF to Isabel Patterson, Jan. 30, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 25; DSF to Carl W. Ackerman, Sept. 29, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 53; DSF to Louis Towley, June 5, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 52.

Yet not all military experts shared General MacArthur's enthusiasm for the "fog of war" technique. Writing after Freeman's death, T. Harry Williams conceded the dramatic and artistic power of his method but argued that "drama and artistry are not necessarily the most important things in a description of a battle." The "fog of war" device, Williams contended, "is likely to confuse even a fairly well-informed reader." He cited as a prime illustration Freeman's account of Lee's pursuit of George B. McClellan as the Union commander retreated from the York River to the James during the Seven Days Campaign. "By insisting on remaining at headquarters with Lee, he fails to give a clear and complete picture of Lee's campaign and hence of Lee himself," Williams concluded. "It is probable that many people who complain that they get lost in Freeman's detail are really lost in the fog of his presentation."<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of whether readers found the abundance of detail in R. E. Lee to be confusing or enlightening, they could not help but marvel at the prodigious amount of research that Freeman put into his biography. Freeman claimed, with justification, to have "stated every known, important fact concerning General Lee." His concept of biography required a full disclosure of the facts, which, honestly presented, would speak for themselves. "A

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<sup>21</sup>DSF, R. E. Lee, I, ix; Douglas MacArthur to DSF, Nov. 15, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 24; Williams, "Freeman," 189-90.

biographer, like a dramatist, has no place on the the stage," he asserted in the forward to R. E. Lee. "When he has made his bow to his audience and has spoken his prologue, telling what he will try to exhibit, it is his duty to retire to the wings, to raise the curtain and to leave the play to the actors." The presentation of the facts of the drama did not include speculation on the actors' thoughts. Freeman had little use for the "psychography" practiced by the English biographer Lytton Strachey and his imitators. "Of all the frauds that ever have been perpetrated on our generation, this 'psychography' is in my opinion, the worst," he told a gathering of Civil War enthusiasts. "How dare a man say what another man is thinking when he may not know what he himself is thinking!" Freeman reminded an audience at Dartmouth College that he had spent nearly a score of years studying the life of Lee and had read "a good deal" of what had been written by him and about him. He had learned enough of Lee's method of reasoning to venture an occasional guess as to how Lee reached a general conclusion, such as his conclusion that Grant was heading for Spotsylvania Courthouse on May 7, 1864. He also felt that he had learned enough of Lee's thought processes to know that Lee did not think of some things. For example, he was "fairly sure" that Lee did not think of personal glory when he was given command of the Army of Northern Virginia. "But," he declared, "I do not

flatter myself that I can capture a single positive thought of Lee's at a single moment in his sixty-three years, and I would count myself a charlatan if I tried to deceive the reader into thinking I knew my subject's thoughts."

Actually, Freeman did often speculate on what Lee was thinking, but he qualified his statements with a "probably," a "doubtless," or a "must have" or posed his speculation in the form of a question.<sup>22</sup>

R. E. Lee was thus primarily a collection of facts, painstakingly compiled, dramatically and eloquently presented. Yet Freeman did not leave the stage entirely to the actors. In two important chapters in the final volume, he summarized his conclusions about Lee the soldier and Lee the man. In "The Sword of Robert E. Lee," he reviewed Lee's accomplishments as a commander and analyzed the qualities that produced them. "Lee was pre-eminently a strategist, and a strategist because he was a sound military logician," he argued. Five qualities gave eminence to Lee's strategy -- "his interpretation of military intelligence, his wise devotion to the offensive, his careful choice of position, the exactness of his logistics, and his well-considered daring." Lee showed weaknesses as a tactician early in the

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<sup>22</sup>DSF to John H. Devlin, Jr., April 20, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 22; DSF, R. E. Lee, I, xiv; DSF, "An Address," 10; DSF, "Adventure in Biography," the Guernsey Center Moore Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1935-36, DSFP-LC, Box 127; DSF, "A Note for Mr. Maxwell Perkins," DSFP-LC, Box 12; Connelly, Marble Man, 152-53.



war, but "he continued to learn the military art as the war progressed, and of nothing did he learn more than of tactics." Freeman maintained that in the end Lee was deterred from elaborate tactical methods only by the inexperience of his brigade commanders. Beyond his always superior strategy and his constantly improving tactical handling of his troops on the battlefield, Lee possessed other qualities that made him a pre-eminent soldier. He was a diligent administrator in the face of a continual need to reorganize his army. "Out of the wreckage of battle, time after time, he contrived to build a better machine," Freeman wrote. "He did not work by any set formula in administering the army, but by the most painstaking attention to the most minute details." Lee's self-control and discipline stood him in good stead when dealing with the civil government, especially President Davis and his superiors in the War Department. He chose his subordinates wisely and made the best of both their excellencies and their limitations. Moreover, he had "a personality and a probity that combined with his repeated victories to gain for him the unshakable confidence of his troops and of the civil population."<sup>22</sup>

Freeman acknowledged that Lee made mistakes and had some defects as a commander. The worst defect was his "excessive amiability," which led him too often to defer to the inferior judgment of subordinates. "His consideration

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<sup>22</sup>DSF, R. E. Lee, IV, 169-87.

for others, the virtue of a gentleman, had been his vice as a soldier," Freeman asserted. He also questioned Lee's theory of the function of high command. Learned from his experiences in Mexico under General Winfield Scott, this theory held that the commanding general should bring his troops together at the right time and place then leave combat to the direction of his subordinates. This theory worked well with a brilliant lieutenant like Stonewall Jackson but often produced disastrous results with those such as James Longstreet or Richard Stoddert Ewell. Yet, concluded Freeman, when all of Lee's defects and mistakes were presented at their worst, when all of the disadvantages facing him were discounted and his advantages played up, "the balance to his generalship is clear and absolute." To those who wished to build up or tear down Lee's military reputation by comparing him with the great captains of history, Freeman responded: "Circumstance is incommensurable; let none essay to measure men who are its creatures. Lee's record is written in positive terms; why invoke comparatives? The reader who can appraise the conditions under which he fought can appraise the man."<sup>24</sup>

In his forward to R. E. Lee, Freeman denied that he had made any attempt to "interpret" his subject. He regarded Lee as "a man who was his own clear interpreter." Yet when he had at last finished his complete draft of the

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 167-69, 187.

manuscript, he felt the need to provide a final summation of the man. The result was "The Pattern of a Life," a chapter written "from the heart." Probably with an eye cast toward Lytton Strachey, William E. Woodward and other practitioners of the "debunking" school of biography, Freeman wrote:

Beneath that untroubled exterior, they said, deep storms must rage; his dignity, his reserve, and his few words concealed sombre thoughts, repressed ambitions, livid resentments. They were mistaken. Robert Lee was one of the small company of great men in whom there is no inconsistency to be explained, no enigma to be solved. What he seemed, he was -- a wholly human gentleman, the essential elements of whose positive character were two and only two, simplicity and spirituality. . . . His language, his acts, and his personal life were simple for the unescapable reason that he was a simple gentleman.

Religious faith and the code of a gentleman could not be separated. "Everywhere the two obligations went together; he never sought to exonerate as a Christian for what he had failed to do as a gentleman, or to atone as a gentleman for what he had neglected as a Christian," Freeman said of Lee. "He could not have conceived of a Christian who was not a gentleman." Lee's faith implied kindness, devotion to duty and humility. Bred of Lee's humility before God was a sense of submission to the Divine will that enabled him to accept "fame without vanity and defeat without repining." There was nothing of blind fatalism or resignation in Lee's faith, for his concept of duty demanded that he always strive to do the best of which he was able. Yet, Freeman affirmed,

"Believing that God was Infinite Wisdom and Eternal Love, he subjected himself to seeming ill-fortune in the confidence that God's will would work out for man's good." The last implication of Lee's faith was a spirit of self-denial. For Freeman, this was Lee's most important trait of all and the one the author chose to leave in the minds of his readers as he concluded his monumental biography:

And if one, only one, of all the myriad incidents of his stirring life had to be selected to typify his message, as a man, to the young Americans who stood in hushed awe that rainy October morning as their parents wept at the passing of the Southern Arthur, who would hesitate in selecting that incident? It occurred in Northern Virginia, probably on his last visit there. A young mother brought her baby to him to be blessed. He took the infant in his arms and looked at it and then at her and slowly said, 'Teach him he must deny himself.'

That is all. There is no mystery in the coffin there in front of the windows that look to the sunrise.<sup>25</sup>

Freeman surmised that "The Pattern of a Life" became the most frequently read chapter of all that he ever wrote. In later years it also became the most frequently criticized by those who saw more in Lee than merely a simple Christian gentleman. Yet most readers in Depression-era America were seeking inspiration from the great figures of their past. They found it, meticulously documented and movingly presented, in R. E. Lee. They purchased enough copies to help make the author a wealthy man. They showered him with

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., I, ix and IV, 494, 501-5; DSF to Ervin L. Dayton, Aug. 14, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 105.

praise. They awarded him a Pulitzer prize. Douglas Freeman, who had had high ambitions since his college days, was justifiably proud of his achievement. Yet Lee was so clearly his personal inspiration that there is no reason to doubt his word that he had received no richer compensation than having been "privileged to live, as it were, for more than a decade in the company of a great gentleman."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.; DSF, R. E. Lee, I, viii.

## CHAPTER XI

### MILESTONES

The year 1935 was one of milestones for Douglas Freeman. A celebrity in Richmond and in Virginia for a quarter-century, Freeman became, as a result of his prize-winning biography of Robert E. Lee, a figure of national, even international, importance. Thanks primarily to his close relationship with Stewart Bryan, he had met notables such as Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George and Ferdinand Foch during the Twenties. Yet the acclaim awarded R. E. Lee brought him into an even wider circle of important persons and increased the audience for his views on both the history of the Civil War and current affairs. And 1935 also marked the year in which Freeman's conservative instincts finally rebelled against the New Deal and caused him to move into the ranks of the loyal opposition. A sad and significant footnote to the year was the death at 91 of Douglas' beloved father, Walker Freeman, the man who had done more than any other to instill in him the faith that informed his thoughts about the past, guided his actions in the present and molded his hopes for the future.

Now approaching the half-century mark, Douglas had become in appearance and in habits the rather eccentric figure who was to become familiar to a generation of Virginians. Nearly everyone who recalled their first

meeting with "the Doc" commented that he struck them as being much older than he really was. In part, his physical appearance conveyed this impression. He stood just over five feet, ten inches tall with what impressed one young reporter as "the tidy bay window of a prosperous archbishop." He usually covered this ample frame with a starched shirt and a black or blue suit and showed a fondness for bow ties. When outdoors he usually sported a fedora atop his massive head. When he removed his hat, he revealed a high forehead that was becoming even higher as his dark blond hair receded. His oval face featured a large, high-bridged nose and a rounded chin. Mischievous, gray-green eyes peered from behind wire-rimmed spectacles. He had a moderately ruddy complexion, but his white skin tended to pale very quickly if not exposed to the sun. A lipfull of chewing tobacco yielded to cigarettes and eventually to abstinence after he concluded that smoking took up too much time. Even more than his appearance, his manner was that of a man older than his years. He dismissed his daily editorial staff conferences with the admonition: "Go ye also into the vineyard, my Christian brethren!"

Virginus Dabney, who began his career as a reporter for the News Leader and by 1935 had become editor of the morning Times-Dispatch, recalled that Freeman "went out of his way to be friendly with me, even to the extent of addressing me as 'my sweet boy' when I was forty years old and he was

in his fifties. I almost wondered if he was going to pat me on the head."<sup>1</sup>

Although the Freemans did not move to "Westbourne," their large home on Harlan Circle, until three years later, the basic pattern of Douglas' daily life was set by 1935. He was always an early riser, gradually getting up earlier and earlier until by the 1940s, he arose at 2:30 a.m. He made his devotions at the small altar in his bedroom, made his bed, shaved and dressed in exactly 12 minutes, cooked and ate his breakfast of boiled eggs and toast and drove to his office, where he wrote his editorials and had them in the hands of the linotypist by the time he delivered the first of his two daily radio newscasts at 8:00 a.m. To the dismay of the radio staff, he liked to time his entry so that he arrived precisely as the announcer intoned: "Here is Dr. Freeman." After the broadcast, he assembled his staff for a conference, or "powwow," as the cub reporters called it. This took place around his remarkably ordered desk beneath a huge wall clock and a sign that read in large black letters: "Time alone is irreplaceable; waste it not." (The misspelling was the fault of the printer, but Freeman left it uncorrected out of consideration for the printer's feelings.) After the conference, Freeman answered his often

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<sup>1</sup>James Jackson Kilpatrick, "Richmond Stayed Staid," Southern Living (Nov., 1982), 202, 204; DSF to Melvin N. Nichols, Aug. 13, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 112; Bryan, The Sword Over the Mantel, 24; Dabney, Across the Years, 107.



voluminous mail with the able assistance of his secretary, Miss Henrietta Beverley Crump, saw visitors and attended to other business until noon, when he delivered his second broadcast. At 1:00 p.m., he left the newspaper office and went home for lunch, after which he napped for exactly 15 minutes. He relied on his innate sense of time for an alarm clock. For the rest of the afternoon, he worked at his second career. He did all of his historical writing in his spartan third-floor study. He sat in a Morris chair with wide arms and wrote on a lapboard that was often the back of a large book that had disintegrated. He used large, specially cut sheets of heavy white paper that he fastened to the board with rubber bands. Believing that the typewriter encouraged verbosity, he wrote all of his books in small, neat longhand, each letter formed swiftly and separately. He arranged his note cards in chronological order and numbered them with a numbering machine. At 5:30 p.m., he came down for a drink (originally liquor but later iced tea) and joined the family for dinner at 6:00. More writing followed dinner. Bedtime came early, usually by 8:30. There were occasional variations to this schedule, though not to the overall theme of getting the maximum amount of work out of each day. In 1934 Freeman accepted an appointment to teach one day a week at the Columbia University School of Journalism in New York City. For the next seven years, he would take the sleeper from Richmond

and arrive in New York around 6:30 a.m. on the day he was to teach (usually Tuesday). After breakfast at the Hotel Pennsylvania across from the station, he would take the subway to Columbia, meet his classes and return to Richmond on the 8:30 evening train. His out-of-state speaking engagements also increased after the publication of R. E. Lee, but they never prevented him from giving dutiful attention to his primary tasks of newspaper editing and historical writing.<sup>2</sup>

The increasing obligations outside Virginia were indicative of Freeman's widening circle of admirers. Yet within the Old Dominion, voices of dissent sometimes rose above the chorus of acclaim. The most shrill voice was that of Emily Clark, former society editor of the News Leader. In 1927 Miss Clark published Stuffed Peacocks, a collection of satirical sketches that pilloried the Richmond society of her day. Her final chapter, "Death-Mask in Wax," was a thinly veiled portrait of Freeman. She named the subject of her biting sketch "Payson Curle," but anyone even remotely familiar with Richmond journalism instantly read "Freeman" for "Curle." As the sketch opened, Mr. Curle sat at his desk in the newspaper office engaged in writing an editorial

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<sup>2</sup>Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, "Douglas Southall Freeman: My Father as a Writer," Richmond Literature and History Quarterly (Spring 1979), 37-39; Cheek, "Reflections," 34-35; NL, June 15, 1953; Mary Wells Ashworth, "Douglas Southall Freeman: 'Prospector of the Past,'" Richmond Quarterly (Spring 1984), 37.

for Armistice Day. As was his wont on such occasions, Curle centered his editorial around his great hero, Robert E. Lee. "Cato did not more frequently call the attention of his fellow-citizens of Rome to the fact that Carthage must be destroyed than Curle reminded the citizens of the most ancient commonwealth, and occasionally those of the country at large, of the fact that perfection had not so long ago walked those streets and roads and fields," said Miss Clark. As Curle completed his editorial and turned to reading a local political story by a young reporter, the narrator took direct aim at his reputation. "To a large group of the more erudite class he was the accepted Samuel Johnson of his day," she wrote. "To this group he was careful not to express religious views of any kind. A minority wondered what he thought or felt on the subject outside of his carefully regulated Sunday morning lectures, but his personal conversation failed to make this clear. Moreover, he had succeeded in making his unfortunate exterior as distinctive to them as ever Polaire's ugliness was to Paris." After describing the drawling, tobacco-chewing Mr. Curle as one who "had capitalized his uncouthness, exploited it indeed," she continued the assault:

He had developed to its uttermost possibilities a natural talent for progressing along double paths, and except in purely literary products implicating the Civil War, incarnate in the person of General Lee, the rightness of the Democratic party, and the wickedness of Germany, he achieved a triumphant ambiguity. Prohibition, equal

suffrage, and other parallel topics were draped with so many evasions, with arguments on both sides, and surrounded by so many avenues of escape that the most agile intelligence was tested to its limit in following Curle's labyrinthine discussions.... His presentation of almost any disputed topic formed a faultless figure eight. An atmosphere of brown books and profundity blended with omniscience, made his editorials acceptable even to some of the subscribers who at one time or another paused to think. "Our State," he would conclude, in a moment of public stress, "can be trusted to be herself." No exposition of just what composed that self had ever been made by Curle, but the sonorousness of the sentence was soothing.

When Curle finished reading the story on local politics, he turned to perusing the final edition of the paper. He glanced first at his own work, which was "a resounding challenge to the New South to maintain the ancient heroic standards of the old. And every ideal of that Old South, even more specifically of the most ancient commonwealth, had been happily drawn together and bound fast in one heroic-sized figure, that of Lee." Curle consistently brought this to the attention of the New South in his editorials and in speeches "before the United Confederate Veterans, the Sons of Veterans, and all other organizations of a proved docility." Curle's life-work, a biography of Lee, was already planned, and from the mass of material he had collected he shaped one unmistakable point: "the moral of a great refusal, a refusal which distinguished this man from every other military genius, a refusal to compromise. The Southern young man who accepted the role of page to good

King Wenceslas, and that young man alone, was in any sense worthy of his inheritance." As the sketch drew to a close, Curle decided to read again the young reporter's story on local politics:

It was quite as it should be. There was nothing here to alarm any present or prospective advertiser, nothing at all here to threaten the surprising amount of money gathered dilly by this paper under Curle's superlatively satisfactory management. Taken all in all it was a good day, even for Curle, who belonged to that fortunate order of men who know their world and use its days in the light of their knowledge. The young South had again been planted on the exact path which knows no variableness or deviation, and a great newspaper, the most powerful in the State, had again been made safe for solid citizenry.

Miss Clark's caricature was perhaps unnecessarily harsh. Yet it did serve to demonstrate that even in Richmond there were those who did not see Robert E. Lee as the transcendent figure in Southern history or believe that all of the problems of the New South could be solved by a return to the traditional values of the Old. While Miss Clark's description of Curle's editorials as faultless figure eights was unfair, it revealed that some Richmonders preferred a more hard-hitting, highly opinionated editorial page than Freeman was wont to produce.<sup>2</sup>

Although he continued to couch some of his editorial opinions in the diplomatic language Miss Clark denounced as "triumphant ambiguity," Freeman's faith in the traditional

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<sup>2</sup>Clark, Stuffed Peacocks, 215-28.

values finally led him to part company with the New Deal in 1935. In January the President proposed to Congress an expanded program of public works and the creation of a national social security system. The proposed social security legislation included a provision for old-age pensions that shocked Freeman. He conceded the duty of America to relieve the distress of the elderly who had no children on whom to rely for support. Yet he opposed government pensions for those whose son or daughter could provide such support. "We would destroy one of the few remaining principles of family life were we to let it be decent for the son to disavow his obligation to the sire and to pass on to government the expense of caring for the outworn toiler," he maintained. Moreover, he believed the President raised false hopes in suggesting that the states might match the proposed \$15-a-month federal pension. In reality, only about half a dozen states were prepared to do this. Though he placed most of the blame for the program's shortcomings on Roosevelt's lieutenants, some of whom "seek forthwith to create an undefined millenium in an undetermined way," he shared the apprehensions of many businessmen that "the president is creating another great pension bloc that will prove even more powerful than that of ex-service men." Freeman did not object to the provision for a system of federal-state unemployment insurance, for he had served on a commission appointed by Governor John

Garland Pollard in 1933 to study the matter. Yet he decried what he regarded as the carelessness and arrogance of those who sought immediate Congressional approval of all New Deal legislation. "With all our heart," he wrote, "we hope this congress will find a sound tax basis for unemployment insurance and a safe actuarial footing for old-age pensions; but equally we protest against the attempt that is being made to 'line up' congressmen in the name of false liberalism and to force them to vote for the president's plan without subjecting it to the most deliberate and critical analysis. When common-sense regard for ability to perform a contract becomes treason to 'liberalism,' then that brand of liberalism discredits itself."<sup>4</sup>

Increasingly, Freeman found his own brand of liberalism out of step with the New Dealers, many of whom "have an overconfident arrogance, a reckless disposition to experiment, and a disdain for legislative control that are dangerous in themselves and most irritating to congressmen." He continued to be more charitable toward the President than toward his lieutenants, and he acknowledged Roosevelt's enormous popularity with the American public. He virtually took it for granted that FDR would win re-election in 1936, but with the possibility of a third term already being raised, Freeman expressed confidence that "the voters will

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<sup>4</sup>William Edward Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York, 1963), 124-32; NL, March 25, 1933, Jan. 25, Jan. 28, Jan. 31, 1935.

not disdain an unwritten law that will have held for 144 years." He also felt confident that the Supreme Court "can and will say 'No' when the congress or the executive overstep the law or the constitution." When the Court denied the constitutionality of the government's repudiation of the gold clause in government bonds and prevented bondholders from suing for reimbursement by only a 5-4 vote, Freeman argued that the administration should consider itself warned "against further adventures on the hairline of constitutionality." As the gap between Freeman and the New Dealers widened, he found his views according more and more with those of Virginia's anti-New Deal Senators, Carter Glass and Harry F. Byrd. Glass, a 19th-century liberal who desired minimal federal involvement in the economy, had been critical of the New Deal from the beginning, even while remaining on very good terms with Roosevelt. Byrd had entered the Senate only when FDR appointed Claude A. Swanson to head the Department of the Navy. Freeman had predicted that young Mr. Byrd "will prove the most valuable lieutenant Mr. Roosevelt has in smoothing the way for disputed legislation." Byrd had indeed supported the legislation of the Hundred Days, but by 1934, having won election in his own right and believing that the national emergency was past, he began to criticize openly the President's regulatory policies and the fiscal extravagance of the New Deal programs. Freeman praised the Old Dominion's Senators



for "bringing into the legislative councils of the nation the long experience of a state that is fiscally conservative." Virginia's post-Civil War experience had taught her sons "that the re-establishment of public credit and the restoration of industry depended upon the sternest economy." Freeman knew that the New Dealers and their supporters would denounce Virginia's Senators for their opposition, but he also predicted that thoughtful Virginians would "be careful to distinguish between political liberalism and fiscal conservatism" and would not make the mistake of assuming that Byrd and Glass "are lacking in sympathy for human distress because these two men believe in sound finance."<sup>5</sup>

On June 20, 1935, "a date that will be historic in the annals of the United States," Freeman chose as the News Leader's thought for the day Tennyson's "We have but faith. . . ." Yet from this day forward, his own faith in the "sane liberalism" of the national Democratic party was lost forever. The preceeding day the President had delivered a message to Congress in which he asked for a new tax law that placed a greater burden on upper income groups. Coming on the heels of Roosevelt's demand for passage of the Social Security Act, the Wagner labor proposal, a new banking bill

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., March 2, 1933, Jan. 30, Jan. 31, Feb. 4, Feb. 19, Feb. 21, 1935; Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 612; Ronald Lynton Heinemann, Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion (Charlottesville, 1983), 137-40.

and the Public Utilities Holding Company Act, this "soak the rich" tax scheme proved to be the last straw for Freeman. The Wagner labor bill was of doubtful constitutionality and represented "the wrong means to a proper end" because it gave "all the advantage to labor." The Social Security Act was also of doubtful constitutionality and attempted "too much at one time." The proposed tax legislation called not only for higher taxes on individual and corporate income but also for increased inheritance taxes. From the very beginning of his editorship, Freeman had declared the News Leader to be "in full accord" with the principle of inheritance tax. Writing in 1931 to an Australian friend, he said that while he generally considered inheritance taxes on small estates to be unjust, he supported levies on very large estates, especially those that made no provision for charity. He sounded this theme again in 1935, but he believed the Roosevelt program went too far. Calculating that \$633,000 of a \$1,000,000 estate would go to the government under the plan, Freeman speculated that Roosevelt was "'spiking the guns' of Huey Long, lest that demagogue line up the discontented."<sup>4</sup>

A part, though only a very small part, of Freeman's motivation for opposing the "soak the rich" tax package may have been concern for his personal estate. Between 1920 and

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<sup>4</sup>NL, Jan. 15, 1915, June 20, June 25, 1935; DSF to Newton Wanliss, May 12, 1931, DSFP-LC, Box 20; Leuchtenburg, FDR and the New Deal, 150-52.

1933, his net income more than doubled from \$7,310.28 to \$15,363.96. After the astonishing commercial success of R. E. Lee, his net income rose to \$27,301.76 for 1934 and \$32,649.03 for the following year. Yet much more than a possible threat to his growing personal fortune prompted Freeman's strong stand in opposition to the new tax proposals. For his part, he found it "very doubtful whether any man is made happy by a single dollar he makes above half-a-million." Moreover, he believed that wealth was "more a handicap than a help" for those who inherited it. But the confiscatory nature of Roosevelt's tax plan seemed designed "to punish private effort." Freeman set forth the gist of his opposition first in his editorial of June 20, then in a private letter to Stewart Bryan. "We must never make success culpable in itself, or take from any man the incentive to labor hard in order that he may pass on to his children enough to keep his family name alive in honor and dignity," the editor contended in the News Leader. "The desire to do that is physiological, not capitalistic." On June 24, he penned a candid letter to Mr. Bryan, who was on vacation in Nova Scotia:

I hope I have not gone too far in criticizing the latest antics of His Excellency, the President. That demagogic message in which he tried to steal the thunder of Huey Long was a little more than I could stand. . . . I do not deny that there are good arguments for the higher taxation of very large fortunes, . . . but as I interpret Mr. Roosevelt's policy, he would carry this business of confiscatory taxation to the point where he would make it a

crime for anyone to be thrifty enough to bequeath to the next generation enough money to maintain a family tradition. When he does that, it seems to me he destroys one of the great incentives to initiative and to business conservatism. Perhaps that is exactly what he wants to do. Even so, what is left to a man after he is fifty years of age if he has no incentive to save and if he has no hope that he can transmit to the next generation enough money to make possible the continuance of his family on a scale of decent living? We have never had within the whole of human history a democracy that did not have in it some of the evidence of aristocracy, which aristocracy had in part to be sustained by inherited wealth. He is, therefore, not merely destroying family life, but he is taking from democracy one of its few stabilizing and intelligent elements.<sup>7</sup>

Roosevelt did not push hard for passage of the inheritance tax, and Congress ultimately rejected it. Yet Freeman's attitude toward FDR and the national Democratic leadership was never again the same. To use his own "road" metaphor, the administration had taken a sharp curve to the left. He himself continued down a middle path that in the changing context of the times appeared to veer right. However much he disliked Harry Byrd's control of politics within the Old Dominion, he became a firm supporter of Byrd's efforts to restore fiscal conservatism in Washington. His letters to the Senator sounded an increasingly conservative political tone, as well. "The battle is one of

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<sup>7</sup>DSF, Federal Income Tax Return for 1920, DSFP-LC, Box 11; DSF, Federal Income Tax Returns for 1933, 1934 and 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 23; NL, Aug. 11, 1928, June 20, 1935; DSF to Anne B. Freeman, April 12, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 97; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, June 24, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 21.

constitutionalism against chaos," he wrote Senator Byrd on June 29, "and we cannot afford to compromise on this." A few days later he told Byrd that "there is opportunity for those younger senators who have the Confederate and states' rights background to rally and perhaps to save the country from these centralizing influences that now threaten it with ruin." He echoed Byrd's criticism of the wastefulness of many New Deal programs. He predicted that the Works Progress Administration would produce "incredibly small permanent results" in return for its cost and added sneeringly that "the authors of this wasteful, impractical policy are the men who are clamoring for a constitutional amendment to give them still more power to be misused!" No, if the federal government was to take over total control of the American economic system, it must not be attempted "by a single brief amendment, by rephrasing a present section of the constitution, or by eliminating a clause here or there." Rather, Freeman asserted in September, such a revolution required the calling of a constitutional convention and the ratification of the new federal constitution by three-fourths of the states.<sup>2</sup>

Though no such total "revolution" ever took place, the policies of the "Second Hundred Days" caused a revolutionary turn in Freeman's political loyalties. The break with the

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<sup>2</sup>Leuchtenburg, FDR and the New Deal, 153-54; NL, June 20, June 24, July 4, Sept. 18, 1935; DSF to Harry F. Byrd, June 29 and July 3, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 21.

New Deal Democrats was not complete, for he continued to support some New Deal programs. He approved the creation of the National Youth Administration, for example, because he felt that America's young people "deserve the best their country can do for them and they assuredly are entitled to some share of the relief fund which represents a national debt they, and not their seniors, must discharge." Yet after the summer of 1935, Freeman's voice, which was now heard with increasing frequency throughout the nation, was raised more often than not in opposition to domestic policies of a Democratic administration that had moved beyond his own brand of liberalism and seemed increasingly hostile to the political faith of the South.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>NL, June 25, June 27, 1935.

## CHAPTER XII

### A VIRGINIA VOICE

As indicated in his correspondence with Harry F. Byrd, part of Douglas Freeman's fear of the growing power of the federal government stemmed from his historical consciousness. For him, as for many Southerners of his generation, federal power still evoked images of Reconstruction. The first year of his editorship saw the golden anniversary of the end of the Civil War and thus provided the young editor with several opportunities to comment on the war and its results. Like his father, Douglas accepted the war's outcome as the work of Divine will. Slavery was an outmoded social and economic system that had to end. The hard toll of the Confederate veterans after Appomattox had been rewarded with impressive economic gains. Freeman listed these gains in his editorial of April 9, 1915, and called them "the increase in the endowment our fathers brought home from Appomattox, . . . the promise of the day when that which the South could not gain by force of arms she shall achieve by agriculture and trade." The Southerners of his generation were in effect "born at Appomattox," and the spirit of Appomattox would "make of our children the captains and counsellors of the nation." Yet acceptance and even approval of the long-term results of the war did not absolve Northern radicals of their guilt in

forcing the bloody struggle in the first place or in violating the South during Reconstruction. The South would not confess past treason. "We went to Appomattox because we had been forced to Manassas," he declared, "and if we own the justice of our final defeat, we concede the murder of our first resistance." Freeman believed that slavery "could have and would have been wiped out from this republic, and the terrible cost would not have had to be paid, if the Northern abolitionists had attended to the business and problems of their own section and let those of the South alone." Northern meddling also delayed progress in the South after the war. When the New York Nation asserted in 1915 that the South "owes its public school system to black reconstruction legislation," the News Leader shot back: "Among the forces which contributed most potently to [the retardation of correct educational practice in the South], and likewise obstructed progress of the system, were the agitation of 'mixed schools' and repugnance to what was considered coercive alien general taxation for public school education." Southerners were only willing to bear the burden of taxation for public schools "after our emergence from the shadow of 'black reconstruction legislation.'" The Civil War and Reconstruction only served to interrupt the development of public schools in the South, and the system was reborn only after the forced legislation of Reconstruction was undone. Federal economic policies since



the war seemed designed to benefit the interests of the North at the expense of the South. When the federal government under the leadership of Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson finally lowered the protective tariff, the Senate of Massachusetts passed a resolution favoring its revision "in such a manner as to protect adequately the industries of the United States, and particularly those of the commonwealth of Massachusetts." Freeman termed this action "Massachusettsism all over" and concluded: "The economic vision of Massachusetts is, and always has been, bounded by Massachusetts state lines."<sup>1</sup>

During the next two decades, Freeman gradually softened his tone toward the North. Except when provoked by Republican campaign tactics, especially in 1928, he rarely made editorial references to Reconstruction after 1915. His comments on Abraham Lincoln show the effect of his mellowing attitude. On the 50th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, Freeman wrote:

Lincoln brought a new type of man into public life. It was the type of Jackson's second administration, with an added element of racial demagogism after Lincoln's death, the popularity of this type brought in a new and lower standard of public service. It is the pension graft that has been the scandal of America; it ushered in that era of pandering to the negro which has been a humiliation to the white; it substituted the whim of politicians -- styled the 'institution' of Lincoln -- for the careful study of public

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<sup>1</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 272-74; NL, Feb. 15, March 22, March 30, April 9, 1915.

problems; it laid the foundation for that subservience of government to business from which America is only now recovering.

He conceded only that there "is a place in the romance of a nation for a Lee and a Lincoln, a Colligny and a Richelieu." Seven years later Freeman admitted that a strong case could be made either for or against Lincoln and urged Southerners to be tolerant toward Northern veneration of his memory.

There are limits, of course, beyond which Southern tolerance cannot go. Hunter always will be anathema. Sherman's behavior at Johnston's surrender did not atone for his march to the sea. The name of Sheridan always will be a hissing in the South. But Lincoln -- let each of us take a grip on his prejudices and preconceptions, and remember that the North looks on Lincoln as we on Lee. We demand that our demi-god be respected: Why should we assail the idol of the North?

Even in the heated climate of 1928 he urged the South to cease its "abuse" of Lincoln and assured a correspondent that his father shared his views. By 1935 he was willing to grant Lincoln the ultimate hero-status -- equality with Lee. "A nation that produced two such men for the second great crisis of its life need not fear, when the third crisis comes, that it will have lost its vitality and will be leaderless," he affirmed. Freeman's daughter Mary Tyler later recalled that her father once sent her to her room to reflect on Lincoln's greatness after she had said in a very

unpleasant way that this was "old Lincoln's" birthday.<sup>2</sup>

In an editorial written in 1922, Freeman warned Southerners not to relax their vigilance lest school textbooks and other histories again come to be dominated by partisan New England writers. A decade later he lamented that his fellow Southerners had "sedulously confined ourselves to history written from what we frankly admitted was the 'Southern point of view.'" Wider reading would enable Southerners to "appreciate the self-effacing determination of President Lincoln" as well as the largeness of other Union heroes. "It will do any Southerner good, as man and citizen, to read of Hancock, or of Gibbon, of Sedgwick or of Upton," he advised. "They were men of whom any nation could be proud." As for Northerners who continued to write or speak disparagingly of Lee, Freeman no longer considered them worthy of a reply. "Virginians ought no more to discuss their great men with persons of this type than they would discuss their family affairs with them," he declared. By 1937 Freeman was counseling vigilance not in preventing Northern control of history but in "avoiding the provincial state of mind which leads us to think that Southern problems are the only problems, and Southern life the only worthwhile life in America." He feared that "a

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., April 14, 1915, June 24, 1922, Feb. 12, 1935; L. M. Williams to DSF, March 27, 1928 and DSF to Williams, March 29, 1928, both in DSFP-LC, Box 14; Cheek, "Reflections," 36.

group is developing in the South that is becoming very complacent in its backward-looking philosophy and positively patronizing in its attitude toward those whose chief interest is in the future." Moreover, much of what Southerners cherished in their past had in fact been an illusion:

It is amazing how we Southern people have hugged the illusion of a South that lived in great columnated residences and spoke always in soft and courteous tones. There were such homes; there was such speech. Along with them there was class cleavage, the harshest clash of proud individualism, a cruel struggle for existence by marginal poor whites, and a bitterness of public utterance that now seems incredible.<sup>2</sup>

Freeman did not want to see the Mason-Dixon line erased, but he wanted both Northerners and Southerners to "go over it often enough to respect the man on the other side of it." Because of its close proximity to the Mason-Dixon line, Virginia was in a unique position to serve as a link between North and South.

Every one of us acknowledges the sentimental tie with the South and rejoices in it. We avow ourselves Southerners when we do not speak of ourselves as Virginians; but the distinctive quality of our life is that it softens and blends the flavor of extremes. Because this was so as long ago as 1861, Virginia called a peace conference in Washington. When it failed and secession was denounced as rebellion, Virginia joined the South. She has never regretted that choice, though it made her a battlefield and gave her one-party rule for two generations. Today,

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<sup>2</sup>NL, June 13, 1922, Sept. 5, Sept. 8, 1932, June 15, Sept. 10, 1937.

she gains from associating with both North and South. The time will never come, we hope, when Southerners cease to remember that this city once was their capital, defended by boys from every State in the Confederacy; but neither will Richmond ever seem alien, we trust, to the men and women of the North or of the West. In the strictest sense, our economic responsibilities are Southern, but increasingly our opportunities are Northern. Is it too much to hope that Virginia can help interpret each section to the other?

As one of Virginia's leading citizens whose personal opportunities increasingly lay in the North, Freeman sought to act as an interpreter between North and South. When he spoke to the South, he spoke of the importance of economic and social progress, which was to be achieved primarily through improved public education. When he spoke to the North, he spoke of the importance of accompanying political liberalism with fiscal conservatism and of allowing the states a certain amount of control over their destinies. Always he spoke in a Virginia voice that sought to "soften and blend the flavor of extremes."<sup>4</sup>

If political labels need be applied, perhaps that of "moderate" best describes Douglas Freeman after 1935. He continued to cherish many liberal ideals, and compared to many of his fellow Virginians, he might be termed a life-long liberal. Yet in the changing national context, his insistence on fiscal conservatism and limited federal power no longer placed him in the liberal camp. In 1936, in

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 17, 1938, April 6, 1939.

one of the many speeches he made outside Virginia after winning the Pulitzer prize for R. E. Lee, Freeman acknowledged that his own faith no longer made him a liberal in a society whose beliefs had changed. He told a group of students at Columbia University that "the transcendent change that has come in the mind of men has been their agreement to abolish the concept of hell." It would take a generation for the full effect of this change to be felt, but it would profoundly alter the life of the multitude. Conceding that a religion based entirely on fear was in error, Freeman nonetheless worried about the consequences of removing the "potent restraint" of fear. "Moral inhibitions are going to be exceedingly difficult to impose on that element of our population that has agreed that they are not going to be punished unless they are caught," he maintained. "There you have one of the great problems that faces the world." Another great change was the refusal of the Western world to suffer pain. Part of the philosophy of the old world was that pain and suffering are inevitable and must be born as strongly and as firmly as possible. Modern medicine had made it possible for men to say: "We will not suffer physical pain." That may have been a gain for mankind. Yet because men had said they would not suffer physical pain, "by a simple spread of the implication they said, 'We are not going to suffer economic pain.'"

This refusal to endure pain, physical or economic, was

probably going to be the greatest single thing shaping the future of America. "It is going to shape our politics beyond expression," Freeman remarked. "It is going to shape our tax bill so tremendously that those of us who now have made our competence are never going to be allowed to get any more." These new standards of public expenditure would be maintained as long as the American people could bear them. Quoting the archaeologist Flinders Petrie, Freeman concluded on a rather pessimistic note:

He says that from earliest times in Egypt, the tendency was from autocracy to democracy, until democracy ate everything up, and then there was a swing back to autocracy. Democracy may eat everything up in America. Spengler said: 'Rome needed a Caesar; Caesar came.' We are now faced with the return of the Caesars. Who knows?="

Freeman, who believed Americans would have to answer -- to their children if not in Hell -- for their economic sins and who thought that some economic pain was better than the narcotic of expanding federal relief, continued throughout 1935 and 1936 to support Senators Byrd and Glass in espousing the cause of fiscal conservatism and states' rights. In July, 1935, he addressed the annual convention of the Virginia Press Association in New York and defended the course of Glass and Byrd as being in the "fine old traditions of Virginia." Though no one should be allowed to

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"Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 231, 441-43; DSF, "Your Age," talk before the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, May 14, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 127.

go hungry, it was "disloyal to posterity" to continue piling up huge federal deficits. "A proper division of authority and responsibility between the Federal Government and the States is as important as any other question in America," he told his audience. "Virginia is ready now to do battle on the floors of Congress for States' rights just as on the battlefield in times past." He was answered by New York's fiery Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, who declared that "American traditions" must be passed on to posterity and that unless current problems were solved, these traditions might not be preserved to pass on to posterity. Mayor La Guardia received a "thunderous ovation" from the Virginia newspapermen and, according to at least one pro-New Deal paper, clearly got the best of the debate. Undaunted, Freeman remained true to the faith of fiscal conservatism and states' rights. He credited Virginia's fiscal conservatism for being a key element in mitigating the effect of the depression in the Old Dominion. He attributed the opposition to increased federal power on the part of many older Southerners not just to any old adherence to states' rights but to a deep understanding of American constitutional history acquired through their study of the historical justification of the South's secession. "We who were called the sons of rebels learned enough about the constitution to stand now as its defenders!" he wrote. "It is not so with younger people. Go into any group that was



educated after the schools ceased to expound the old theory of secession and you find far less understanding of the dangers involved in hasty constitutional amendment."<sup>4</sup>

Freeman's most persistent editorial theme in 1936 was that Congress should hold the line on spending and impose heavy, direct taxes on income in order to pay off the debt that had already accumulated. "If the next generation is to be saved from becoming a mere tax-slave of Uncle Sam, the number of those who fight wild expenditures must be increased," he wrote on March 4. "That can only be done by making a larger number of us feel directly the pinch of heavier taxes that extravagance has necessitated." He repeated this argument on April 16 but expressed no hope that a timid Congress would levy heavier taxes on any but the wealthiest classes. "Tax hard, tax now, tax directly -- but tax equitably and spare only the man who is making a meagre living," he urged in May. Later that month he specified that Congress should impose a federal sales tax, collected at the source, and should make every American with an income in excess of \$900 pay at a graduated rate. In June Freeman summed up the theory behind his call for more direct taxes: "American wages will never be adequate till industry is stabilized: industry will not be stabilized till confidence is restored: confidence will not be restored till

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<sup>4</sup>Portsmouth (Va.) Star, July 21, 1935; DSF, "Virginia," Review of Reviews (Jan., 1936), 37; NL, Jan. 8, Feb. 6, 1936.

the budget is balanced: the budget never will be balanced till the body of direct federal taxpayers is sufficiently large to force congress and the administration to an economical policy. Congress did not follow his advice, and Freeman remarked that "President Roosevelt never was quite so lucky as in the fact the election of 1936 comes before the country begins to pay taxes under the amended revenue act," which he considered especially unfair to business.<sup>7</sup>

As the election of 1936 approached, Freeman thought it unwise for conservative Democrats to make an active fight against Roosevelt in the South. Since FDR's re-election appeared certain, opposing him actively would only compel Democratic incumbents in Congress to support the President out of a sense of party loyalty. Even if Roosevelt went "wild" during his second term in office, the country might still be saved from ruin "if we can get a Congress that will not wear his collar." Freeman's advice for Virginia and the South during the campaign was "to damn the absurdities of some Roosevelt policies, but not to put Congressmen so much on the defensive that they will have to endorse what he has done." While Freeman feared a Democratic Congress that would be totally subservient to FDR and the radical New Dealers, he feared a return to reactionary Republican rule even more. "The only thing that reconciles some of us to

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., March 2, March 4, March 12, April 16, April 24, May 1, May 12, May 15, May 29, June 19, July 16, Aug. 14, Oct. 22, 1936.

certain aspects of the New Deal is the memory of the Old," he asserted. "We do not always heed Roosevelt, but we remember Hoover." No, the Democrats must retain power, but they must restrain the urge to attempt to spend the country out of the depression. "Do we believe in a 'more abundant life'? Are we to equalize opportunity?" Freeman asked his fellow Democrats. "Then, in the name of common sense, exercise power so wisely and so prudently that we shall retain public confidence and have continued opportunity of working to these ends." The award-winning biographer of General Lee used a military metaphor in describing the problem facing the Democrats and the best way to meet it. Just as an army on the advance must not outrun itself or its communications, the Democratic party must not go forward too fast, must not "outrun the support of slow-thinking, slow plodding millions." When an advancing army becomes overconfident in the face of slight resistance, it often becomes slack in administration. Similarly, some Democratic administrators ran the risk of becoming careless, even arrogant, because of the overwhelming Democratic majority in Congress. Freeman advised Roosevelt to "be sure . . . that we time our advance precisely; be sure we administer with wisdom and conscience every branch of the government," for nothing was "more vulnerable than a great army strung out on a long, winding road, with the van and the rear-guard miles

apart!"<sup>a</sup>

When election day drew near, Freeman returned to his "road" metaphor in expressing his hopes for the campaign. "Mr. Roosevelt must go far enough to the left to keep the Republicans from turning to the right again; he must not go so far that he rejects the counsel of moderation," he wrote. "The best possible result of the campaign would be for each candidate to pull the other back into the middle of the road." Freeman was not impressed with the Republican nominee, Alfred M. Landon of Kansas. "All that Mr. Landon has offered the country," said the News Leader, "has been a New Deal with an old deck." To those anti-New Dealers who predicted a proletarian revolution and a triumph of communism, Freeman declared that Landon was no more able to prevent such a revolution than was "the pitiful Mr. Hoover, who locked the White House gates and threw a cordon around the enclosure because a few hundred bonus marchers were yelling up the street." In fact, America was the one country in which communism had made no progress since 1932. Freeman attributed this largely to Roosevelt's policies. In formally endorsing FDR's bid for re-election, the News Leader acknowledged that he had made some costly mistakes and selected some bad counsellors but credited him with carrying the nation through an extremely difficult period

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<sup>a</sup>DSF to Albert Shaw, Jan. 2, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 26; NL, Jan. 9, Jan. 22, June 2, 1936.

with a minimum of upheaval. "Roosevelt, for his part, seeks to prevent revolution, not by combating it, but by removing all justification for it," Freeman concluded. "As the campaign ends and the exhortations of the orators die away, we are more convinced than ever that Roosevelt Is Right."<sup>2</sup>

Freeman honestly believed that, compared to the Republican alternative, Roosevelt was right. Yet FDR's second administration, like the first, did not prove to be "right" enough to win the wholehearted approval of the Richmond News Leader. If Roosevelt's policies helped to forestall a true social revolution, they nonetheless revolutionized the relationship between the federal government and the states. The instrument of the Roosevelt Revolution, according to Freeman, was federal aid, "that singular process by which the government of the United States extracted taxes from the citizens of a State and then, for control over the affairs of the State, bartered benefits made possible by those taxes." The heavy spending required for federal aid continued to be Freeman's chief concern. Declaring the depression to be over in January, 1937, he expressed the hope "that the President and the people, counting the cost, will swing away from the spending program, and that a new trend toward economy will prevail in Congress, regardless of the howls of certain jobholders." He continued to support Senator Byrd's efforts to force the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Sept. 14, Oct. 21, Oct. 28, Nov. 2, 1936.

federal government to economize but realized that the battle was nearly lost. Ever since Congress had given Roosevelt "a blank check as a sure prescription for the cure of the nation's economic ills," advocacy of economy had been regarded as disloyalty to the New Deal. Freeman became increasingly critical of Congress for having abdicated its responsibilities to the executive branch. "Unless Congress makes a determined effort to re-establish itself as a co-ordinate branch of government," he warned, "we who mock a German Hitler may some day feel the lash of an American dictator."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman reacted more dispassionately to the President's attempt in 1937 to "pack" the Supreme Court. In his early comments on the issue, he neither endorsed nor condemned the President's proposal but insisted that Congress refuse to act on it during the present session in order to give careful study to the matter. He demanded that the question be submitted to the American electorate in the 1938 elections. He continued this theme throughout the spring and summer of 1937, but his fear of the plan's long-term implications gave his editorials an increasingly anti-Roosevelt tone. He used a baseball metaphor to state the case:

Whether you like its decisions in particular cases or not, the Supreme Court of the United

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Dec. 18, 1936, Jan. 11, Feb. 2, April 26, Dec. 17, 1937.

States is the umpire of all the games in the American political league. If we deny the umpire the authority to make decisions, then what is to become of the rules of the game? Who is to enforce them? Who else than he who has the most powerful grip on the executive and on Congress? It may be the President, as now, or it may be a Senate cabal, as under Harding. Chase the umpire from the grounds, and the game goes to the hardest hitters with the biggest gang of spectators behind them: Who will they be in 1940 or 1944?

In August Congress rejected Roosevelt's Court plan, but the retirement of Justice Willis Van Devanter gave the President the opportunity to appoint a liberal to the Court. When FDR chose Senator Hugo L. Black of Alabama, a New Deal partisan, Freeman was satisfied that Congress had acted wisely in refusing to sanction the Court-packing plan. "Had he nominated even an advanced liberal of judicial mind," Freeman said of Roosevelt, "there could be no reasonable complaint; but when he selected a pronounced partisan, a former prosecuting attorney whose only judicial experience was service for eighteen months as police justice of Birmingham, the President vindicated everything that was done in the Senate to defeat the bill which would have empowered him to name six Blacks to the court -- if he could have found six." With the retirement of Justice George Sutherland in early 1938, Roosevelt was assured of a Court that would uphold the constitutionality of his program. As the retirement of some of the older justices had been in prospect since the beginning of the Court fight, Freeman had to wonder if it had been necessary for Roosevelt to "wage

war" on the Court. "We are not of those who hold that the court in 1936-37 was above criticism," the News Leader commented on January 6, 1938. "It was, we think, in the vernacular of old Virginia, too much 'sot in its ways,' though in time, it would have brought its decisions into line with the necessities of a changing economic order." Yet FDR's refusal to wait patiently for this slow evolution to take place had led him to make the "terrific blunder" of attempting to "pack" the Court.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the lack of patience and thoughtful restraint on the part of many New Dealers was one of Freeman's main editorial criticisms in the late Thirties. As he framed the basic question of the New Deal: "Do the unrest of democracy and the challenge offered by extremists justify the United States in attempting within two Presidential terms to complete a social and economic revolution that will entail adjustments for at least two generations?" History alone would decide whether Roosevelt's pace was the correct one, but Freeman believed that "democracy cannot attain Utopia in one administration or in one generation." He blamed the President's determination to effect a permanent economic and social revolution in such a short time for so destroying the confidence of businessmen that business was unable to take up the slack when the recovery stalled in 1937. He found

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Feb. 6, Feb. 8, Feb. 9, Feb. 12, Feb. 24, Feb. 26, March 10, March 12, March 15, May 19, Aug. 13, 1937, Jan. 6, 1938; Leuchtenburg, FDR and the New Deal, 231-38.



a simple explanation for the overwhelming success of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Unlike many New Deal agencies, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the CCC "had a definite job and stuck to that job. It did not seek to compass Heaven and earth or to create Utopia overnight."<sup>12</sup>

Roosevelt's impatience manifested itself again in his efforts to "purge" Congress of anti-New Deal Democrats in the election of 1938. Since much of the Democratic opposition to the New Deal came from conservative Southerners, many of the Presidential guns were aimed at Southern incumbents during the Democratic primaries. In August, 1937, Freeman had warned his fellow Southern Democrats that party unity depended as much upon them as upon FDR and the New Dealers. Divergent views on the details of the New Deal must not become negative opposition lest the Southern wing of the party become reactionary. Southerners must be willing to compromise and must always "advance a positive, intelligent alternative" to any New Deal policy they opposed. "Always we Southerners must remember that the problems which the New Deal seeks to solve are essentially our regional problems, the problems of poverty, of farm tenancy, of overproduction and of unequal opportunity," he reminded his readers. "If we fail to do our part in the solution of those problems, we betray our

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<sup>12</sup>NL, Aug. 19, Oct. 7, Oct. 13, Nov. 11, 1937, April 5, 1938; Leuchtenburg, FDR and the New Deal, 244.

own people." The following spring he scolded the President's critics for threatening a party split in the midst of renewed economic hard times. Damning everything Roosevelt supported accomplished no good. "The only opposition that counts in the end is discriminating opposition," Freeman maintained. "It must give a man credit for that which he does well if it is to have public respect when it condemns that which he does amiss." Despite such conciliatory statements, he was appalled when Roosevelt launched his effort to unseat his Democratic opponents. Roosevelt, the editor wrote Stewart Bryan on July 12, 1938, "certainly is doing everything in his power to disrupt the south politically." He wondered if the President's aim was to bring about a realignment of parties along liberal-conservative lines. If FDR was indeed calling "left-wing democrats to a 'liberal' standard," that was his right, but dissenting Democrats had an equal right to demand that he not take the party name and that "if he organizes a new party, he do so at the expense of partisans, not at the expense of the next generation that will have to bear a \$40,000,000,000 debt." On August 11, in Barnesville, Georgia, the President attacked that state's conservative Senator Walter F. George. For Freeman, this attack marked "a turning point in the New Deal and a crisis in the history of the Democratic party." He could recall no parallel for it "since the bitter days of Andrew Johnson." Yet when

George emerged victorious in the Democratic primary, the Senator did not gloat. Neither did Freeman. Rather, he took the opportunity to urge once more the pursuit of "honest, sound" liberalism by both President and Congress. "The President may be called on to slow his pace, but conservatives must quicken their step," he wrote on the eve of the November election. "Liberalism must be practical if it is to be sustained and unified if it is to be successful." When the Republicans emerged from the election with new life, Freeman regarded their revival as a good thing for democracy. He had no fear that basic New Deal legislation would be undone. "The revolution is accomplished," he declared. "Administrative changes can and should be made. Economies are possible. The clock will not be turned back."<sup>12</sup>

Freeman gave no indication in the late 1930s that he wanted the clock turned back. To be sure, he longed for a return to balanced budgets and continued to praise Virginia's Congressmen, especially Senators Byrd and Glass,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 252, 266-72; NL, Aug. 24, 1937, April 1, April 8, June 25, July 6, July 14, Aug. 2, Aug. 11, Aug. 12, Sept. 16, Nov. 7, Nov. 9, Nov. 14, 1938; DSF to John Stewart Bryan, July 12, 1938, DSFP-LC, Box 28. With neither of Virginia's anti-New Deal Senators up for re-election in 1938, FDR sought to weaken Harry Byrd and Carter Glass by denying them control of federal patronage in the Old Dominion. This attempt, which was no more successful than the "purge," is chronicled in Alvin L. Hall, "Politics and Patronage: Virginia's Senators and the Roosevelt Purges of 1938," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (July, 1974), 331-50.

for their efforts to reduce federal spending. He continued to oppose, in whole or in part, those New Deal programs that he considered wasteful and those, such as federal wages and hours legislation, that he thought discriminated against the South. He criticized organized labor for engaging in a series of strikes that he felt would cripple national recovery, but he never denied the right of labor to organize, bargain collectively in good faith and even to strike except when the nation's welfare was at stake. He lamented that "America has her share of employers who have never accepted the new economic and social order" and conceded that some legislation guaranteeing the rights of labor was necessary to bring them into line. Similarly, he saw the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act as a necessary evil because "all previous tests have shown that there can be no slum-clearance and no cheap urban housing without some public subsidy." On the fourth anniversary of the passage of the Social Security Act, Freeman expressed his general approval of the program and praised FDR for bringing America "to a new consciousness of social responsibility." In February, 1939, he summarized the attitude that he and many Virginians had toward the New Deal:

Nearly all of us want the New Deal to stand in its just regard for the underdog and for the ideals of social justice. We do not wish the New Deal to advance so fast that it will wear itself out, or to progress so slowly that it will lose all initiative. The one thing most to be desired is that gains shall be permanent and secure and based on sound

pay-as-you-go economics. That must be done to save the country from bankruptcy. With wise leadership, it can be done in a way to reassure industry, to prevent another recession, and to keep faith with the millions of Americans now in distress.

If Freeman's support for the New Deal prior to 1935 was qualified, his opposition to it after that year was also qualified. Like Roosevelt he was increasingly turning his attention from domestic to foreign affairs. In a nation that stood on the brink of involvement in another major military conflict, Freeman believed that the martial experience of Virginia and the South again offered valuable lessons. As one of Virginia's most learned and eloquent citizens, he stood ready to impart those lessons.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>NL, March 26, June 15, June 18, Sept. 2, 1937, Jan. 3, May 23, June 20, Oct. 5, 1938, Feb. 22, Feb. 27, March 21, March 24, May 5, Aug. 14, 1939.

## CHAPTER XIII

### STUDIES IN COMMAND

Like most thoughtful Americans, Douglas Freeman viewed foreign affairs of the 1930s with alarm. In 1933 he called Adolf Hitler's treatment of German Jews an act of "Incredible folly" that would cost Germany thousands of her most useful citizens as well as the good will of other nations. The stupidity of the Nazis' racial policies called Germany's sanity into question. "If she cannot show justice at home, how can she expect to gain confidence abroad?" Freeman asked. Yet by 1936 he was conceding that Hitler had won some amazing successes in foreign affairs and compared his achievements to those of Talleyrand. He blamed the determination of France to keep Germany a subjugated power for raising the risk of another European war. Sacrifices of pride and prestige would be needed to secure European peace, but peace was well worth the price. Similarly, France and Great Britain would also have to concede the right of Germany and Italy to own colonies, especially in Africa. Freeman felt it unwise to have taken all of Germany's colonies from her in 1919 and believed it would be equally unwise to refuse to give her colonial outlets now. "So long as the colonial question is dodged, Germany has a moral and economic grievance," he argued. He favored a cancellation of every remaining provision of the Treaty of Versailles

"that creates animosity or serves as an excuse for excessive armament." While admitting that the fascist states had some legitimate grievances, he did not condone fascism. "Another fifteen years of fascism mean slavery for half of Europe," the editor declared in 1937. "The only doubt is -- which half?"<sup>1</sup>

Freeman sounded many of these themes again in his comments on the Sudetenland crisis of 1938. "Who made Hitler possible?" he asked. "The Nazis? The German industrialists of the Thyssen group? No, the blind men among the Big Four and their advisors at the Peace Conference." The victors of 1919 should not have expected "the false frontiers of the Czech republic to stand any longer than the German Government was weak." The United States, though ably led by Woodrow Wilson at the Peace Conference, was not without blame, either. "Who explains Hitler?" Freeman asked again. "What accounts for him? History may prove that as much of the blame rests on Henry Cabot Lodge and the men who sabotaged the League as on Clemenceau and Foch." Just as Germany had a fair claim to the Sudetenland, so, too, did she have a fair demand for the return of her former overseas colonies. Only when the wrongs of 1919 had been righted could other nations judge German actions. "When Germany's legitimate right to a place

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<sup>1</sup>DSF to The Literary Digest, March 21, 1933, DSFP-LC, Box 18; NL, March 20, March 25, April 1, April 24, Dec. 28, 1936, Oct. 28, 1937.

among the great powers has been recognized by the return of what was taken from her territorially at Versailles -- Alsace and Lorraine apart -- then, but not until then, she may be on trial," Freeman concluded. "If thereafter she seeks the Ukraine or seeks to impose her rule on any other power, the world may be justified in taking up arms, but we must be right before we dare be violent."<sup>2</sup>

In these troubled times, Freeman tried above all to keep the United States out of another foreign war. Even at the height of the domestic squabbles over the Second New Deal, he regarded neutrality in foreign policy as "the most important [subject] before the American people today." The role of the United States was not one of mediator in European disputes but of a military, economic and intellectual neutral. "If the European states are determined to destroy one another, we cannot deter them, but, if we are wise, provident and forehanded, we can preserve one land for human liberty," Freeman wrote in 1936. The cost of strict neutrality would be high, but it would be "infinitely cheaper than participation in war." Though he recognized the problems its strict enforcement might create, Freeman generally approved of the Neutrality Act of 1937. When war between China and Japan put this act to an early test, the News Leader spoke out for neutrality: "We cannot combine profit, sympathy and neutrality in a foreign war."

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Sept. 16, Sept. 19, Sept. 27, Sept. 30, 1938.



Among them we must choose. Our choice is for neutrality." By the time of the Sudetenland crisis of 1938, Freeman admitted that the Neutrality Act was in need of revision, but he confessed himself at a loss to say precisely how it should be revised. As Europe drifted ever closer to war in 1939, he urged Americans to be neutral in mind as well as in deed. Yet he knew this was even less likely than in 1914. Freeman himself admitted that "the democracies of earth must stand together, in the use of their economic resources, or else fall one after another before the totalitarian powers." When the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 24, 1939 made war all but inevitable, Freeman outlined the course America should follow:

We should protect ourselves by a system of neutrality that will open our ports to the merchantmen of every nation and will make available to them any and all American supplies that our industries will contract to deliver; but we must hold, at least for the time, to one provision that did not appear in our neutrality proclamation of 1914. All purchases must be for cash and for overseas transportation in foreign bottoms. American ships must stay out of the war zones; American credit must not be extended any belligerent, lest where our treasure is, our heart be also; no foreign propaganda of any sort must be countenanced; no foreign loans must be floated; whatever we can do, we must do for the relief of non-combatants. If they are hungry, we must feed them from our vast reserve of wheat, wherever they live and under whatever flag.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>DSF to R. Walton Moore, April 5, 1935, DSFP-LC, Box 25; NL, Aug. 26, Aug. 27, 1936, Aug. 30, 1937, Sept. 26, Dec. 13, 1938, Feb. 20, March 20, June 15, Aug. 25, 1939.

After war finally erupted on September 1, Freeman doubled his efforts to keep the US out of the conflict. Hatred of Hitler, however justified, would soon lead to hatred of the German people, and that, in turn, would make Americans easy victims of Anglo-French propaganda. Freeman knew that neutrality would be difficult even without such propaganda. He confessed his own dilemma in his diary: "I have to steel myself always to maintain the principle of American neutrality, while I grieve at the certain death, in a long war, of a British and a French social order that were, in their way, beautiful. What can we do about it? Why should we rush into a burning building that may be doomed?" He reminded his readers as he reminded himself: "The essential fact for every American to remember today and to repeat over and over to himself is compassed in four words -- my country is neutral." He knew that no specific policy of neutrality would guarantee that America could stay out of the war, but he advocated a return to the "cash-and-carry" provision of the Neutrality Act of 1937 as the wisest course.<sup>4</sup>

Following the Nazi sweep through the Low Countries and into France in the spring of 1940, Freeman coupled his appeals for American neutrality with a call for military preparedness. "We must prepare, but, above everything else,

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<sup>4</sup>Diary of DSF, Sept. 5, 1939, DSFP-LC; NL, Sept. 5, Sept. 6, Oct. 20, Nov. 3, 1939; DSF to Harry F. Byrd, April 20, 1939, DSFP-LC, Box 28.

we must prepare without hysteria," he warned his readers. He feared that the increasingly bleak news from Europe would overwhelm so large a segment of the American public that the United States would be forced into the war before it was militarily prepared. Even Stewart Bryan upset Freeman by his "frantic" attitude toward the war. "Arm to the teeth, America, and attend to your own business!" was Freeman's response to Mr. Bryan and others who clamored for immediate American intervention on the side of the Allies. Though he generally approved of President Roosevelt's actions during the crisis created by the German blitzkrieg, he reacted with alarm to the President's description of Italy's declaration of war against France as a "stab in the back." FDR, Freeman said, "must reflect the national conscience, but he must not do so in a manner to complicate foreign relations or to inflame hate." On June 17, 1940, the day France surrendered to the Nazis, the News Leader printed Freeman's prescription for America: "THE LARGEST DUTY WE CAN RENDER THE WORLD IS TO PLAY FOR TIME IN WHICH TO MAKE OUR ARMAMENT EFFECTIVE. This is a truth that deserves to be capitalized and memorized because it should be the basis of national policy." When, on September 3, Roosevelt announced the trade of 50 American destroyers for sundry naval bases on British Islands in the Western Hemisphere, Freeman was enraged. "It's the only time in my life when I have wished I were in Congress," he wrote in his diary. "If I were, I'd move his impeachment

before night." Freeman was appalled at the implications of the President making such an agreement without the consent of Congress and feared even more the message it would send to Germany. Roosevelt's obviously pro-British sentiments were matched by those of Stewart Bryan, with whom Freeman continued to disagree over American policy. In his diary entry for September 27, Freeman reported an "[u]npleasant clash with J.S.B. over war policy: he is too bellicose." In a memorandum written the following day, Freeman tried to explain to his boss the reasons for his cautious editorial approach. Acknowledging some truth in the publisher's contention that the News Leader's trumpet was issuing an uncertain sound, the editor answered only that he knew "too much about war to be certain of anything except that it is uncertain. Behind the most blaring, confident trumpets today may be more of wind than of wisdom." Apparently, his arguments scored with Mr. Bryan, for Freeman reported their next talk as "pleasant," and the paper continued for the next several months to advocate a policy of buying time for rearmament.<sup>5</sup>

Editor and publisher also faced in 1940 the decision whether to endorse Roosevelt for an unprecedented third term in office. In April the pace and cost of the New Deal still

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<sup>5</sup>NL, May 15, May 16, May 17, May 21, June 11, June 17, Aug. 26, Aug. 29, Sept. 3, Sept. 4, 1940; Diary of DSF, May 19, Sept. 3, Sept. 27, Oct. 6, 1940, DSFP-LC; DSF, "An Appraisal for Mr. John Stewart Bryan of the Situation, September 28, 1940," DSFP-LC, Box 35.

figured prominently in Freeman's editorials about the coming campaign, but the Nazi blitzkrieg through Western Europe focused his attention squarely on foreign policy and defense. "Traditional party preferences, old allegiance, a sound record in other respects -- these are destined to mean little in the campaign of 1940 when set against the supreme, the overwhelming issue of national defence," he said at the time of the Democratic convention in July. He continued to express reservations in public and in private about the prospect of a third term for Roosevelt. In his editorials he recounted the News Leader's opposition to many New Deal programs and endorsed the two-term tradition as sound. Privately, he was more pointed. "Roosevelt foolishly renominated tonight," he penned in his diary on July 17. Yet despite his deep misgivings and some enthusiasm for Republican Wendell Willkie, the rain of German bombs on Britain in the summer and fall of 1940 drove home to him the importance of keeping an experienced man in control of American foreign policy and military rearmament. Thus, on October 17, 1940, five months after the German breakthrough at Sedan and four months after the surrender of France, the News Leader gave its editorial endorsement for the third time to Franklin D. Roosevelt. "In the effort that lies ahead, be it for the maintenance of a hazardous peace or for the prosecution of a war to defend American institutions, we believe he is the best qualified man the nation can hope to

name as its leader," Freeman maintained. On the eve of the fateful election, he reviewed the high stakes involved and concluded: "For the conduct of the national defence, at a time of extreme danger, procure the ablest, best qualified leader -- by voting tomorrow for Roosevelt." When FDR again emerged victorious, Freeman expressed satisfaction that "[f]or the next great adventure of American democracy, we have a leader immeasurably more experienced than Lincoln was in one great test, or Wilson at the outset of the other."<sup>4</sup>

During the months following Roosevelt's re-election, Freeman became more and more convinced that the United States would soon have to enter the war against Axis aggression. These months marked the pinnacle of the "Happy Time" for German submarine crews as they threatened to choke off supplies to Great Britain. On May 21, 1941, a Nazi U-boat torpedoed the American freighter Robin Moor, and a week later Roosevelt proclaimed a state of unlimited national emergency. Freeman was depressed by the course the war was taking, especially the sinking of the British battleship Hood, and he now called on Americans to rally to the defense of democracy. "An American realist once said that this nation could not survive half slave and half free," he wrote on May 26. "In the narrowed world of second

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<sup>4</sup>NL, April 19, April 22, June 26, June 28, July 16, July 17, July 18, Oct. 17, Nov. 4, Nov. 6, 1940; Diary of DSF, July 17, 1940, DSFP-LC.

splitting transportation, we have to say this world cannot exist half democratic, and half totalitarian. There must be a choice. America must help in making it the rightful choice." Two days later he invoked the words of another American realist of the Civil War era: "War is hell, but there are deeper, blacker hells than that of defensive war." By mid-summer Freeman believed war with Germany to be inevitable. In fact, he now feared that the pressure exerted on Roosevelt by the isolationists was causing the President to move too slowly toward direct American involvement. "The danger is not that Mr. Roosevelt has gone too far, but that he has not gone far enough," Freeman wrote after the announcement of the Atlantic Charter. He supported the armed convoying of merchant ships between the United States and Great Britain:

Does not delivery follow the lending? Is not convoy the assurance of delivery? Behind it all, we repeat, is the deep instinct which tells us that the preservation of the British Commonwealth of Nations is self-preservation. That instinct we are willing to trust. If we trust it at all, we must follow through. Half-way measures of support are worse than none. They merely anger the Nazis. In the full destruction of Hitlerism, cost what it may, and in nothing less than destruction, is the safety of the British Commonwealth and of ourselves. To attempt to limit our liability is as absurd as to say that we shall use 1,000 gallons of water to put out a fire -- and no more.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1941, DSFP-LC; NL, May 26, May 28, Aug. 5, Aug. 7, Aug. 15, Sept. 17, 1941; DSF to Absalom Willis Robertson, July 8, 1941, DSFP-LC, Box 39.

About 3 p.m. on Sunday, December 7, 1941, Douglas Freeman was just starting out the door for a walk when word came that Japanese forces had attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Ironically, he had been preparing to leave that evening for a meeting in New York of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, of which he was now a trustee. In his editorial of December 8, he expressed relief that war had come in such a way as to unite America for victory. "The one thing that could be done to unify us has been done," he wrote. "An unprovoked, cruel surprise attack has been delivered on a vital outpost in waters that are in every political sense American." Freeman had no illusions that a two-ocean war would be an easy one for the United States. Indeed, he had long counselled a conciliatory policy toward Japan in order to avoid just such a conflict. Yet he harbored no doubts that America would ultimately win the struggle. The American people had been slow to take up the gauntlet, but now that they had accepted the fascist challenge, they would "not stop until Hitler and Mussolini and all the jingoes of Japan have been destroyed."<sup>a</sup>

As he did in many of his editorial campaigns, Freeman wanted to back up his words with actions. Having been denied military service in World War I because of a physical

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<sup>a</sup>Diary of DSF, Dec. 7, 1941, DSFP-LC; NL, Dec. 8, Dec. 11, 1941.



disability, he yearned for a more active role in the second world conflict. He had already played an active part at the state level by serving since the spring of 1940 as the first chairman of the Virginia Defense Council, created by Governor James Hubert Price in order to ensure "that Virginia may be fully and effectively ready to exert her maximum military and industrial, as well as moral, effort for National Defense in the hour of American national danger." Yet his chairmanship ended with the inauguration of a new governor just as America was gearing up as an active belligerent in the war. Several times during the early months of American participation, Freeman wrote to his friend General George C. Marshall to volunteer his services in any capacity. For a time in the early fall of 1942, he even flattered himself into thinking that, at age 56 and with a history of hernia problems, he might be permitted to enlist as a combat soldier. As he explained to his daughter Mary Tyler:

I am intrigued by the idea of getting General Marshall to permit me to enlist as a private soldier. I don't believe I could set a better example than, at 56, to take up arms for combat service and not to content myself with a commission. There is a lot of difference in this war between enlisting to fight and enlisting to wear a uniform. As my days shorten, I want what I do to be done with a purpose. I would be immeasurably happier, if I can stand the strain physically, to fight with the boys than to sit behind a desk in Washington.

While Freeman's sentiments were probably most sincere, he

doubtless realized how improbable it would be for a balding, bespectacled, somewhat portly gentleman of 56 to don combat fatigues, boots and helmet and join "the boys" in a foxhole, for he concluded: "You must not tell your mother about this yet. I have to break it to her gradually; otherwise she will conclude that I am crazy, which I probably am." He quickly abandoned any notion of fighting in the trenches and before long gave up hopes of serving the military in any official capacity.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Freeman had a contribution to make to the American war effort by employing his gifts of speech and of writing. Through his radio broadcasts and his newspaper editorials, he kept anxious families on the homefront apprised of the latest military developments. If he sensed overconfidence on the part of the public, he sought to point out the obstacles to quick Allied success. When he sensed pessimism or despair, he reassured his readers and his listeners that victory would come to American arms. His friends in the War Department so trusted his discretion that they did not censor his editorials or broadcasts. Because of Freeman's access to information and wide knowledge of military affairs, his audience was, as in World War I, probably better informed about events overseas than any other

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<sup>2</sup>James H. Price to DSF et al., May 31, 1940, DSFP-LC, Box 39; Diary of DSF, Jan. 21, 1940, DSFP-LC; DSF to Mrs. Leslie Cheek, Jr., Sept. 25, 1942, DSFP-LC, Box 42; Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945 (New York, 1973), 126-27.

newspaper or radio audience in America. And, as in 1914-1918, he sought to relate current personalities and events to people and places more familiar to Virginians. In general, his commentaries on World War II proved immensely popular, though some of his fellow Virginians, echoing Emily Clark, balked at the continual references to the War of 1861-1865. At least one venerable Richmonder, when asked by his son if he had read Dr. Freeman's comments that day on the war in the Pacific, replied: "Certainly not! I don't give a damn what General Lee would have done on Wake Island."<sup>10</sup>

Actually, Freeman did not often attempt to say what Lee would or would not have done on the battlefields of World War II, but he did believe that the experiences of Lee and his lieutenants in the Army of Northern Virginia offered important lessons for American commanders of the 20th century. After the publication of R. E. Lee made him an internationally recognized authority on military affairs, he became a regular lecturer at the United States Army War College. Several times he lectured on "Methods Employed by General Lee to Maintain Morale in the Army of Northern Virginia." He considered Lee's methods in this regard worthy of study not only because of the great captain's success in establishing and maintaining morale in the face

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<sup>10</sup>Ashworth, "DSF: 'Prospector of the Past,'" 32; Dabney, Across the Years, 107.

of increasing hardships but because Lee faced three conditions "not unlike those we may face in a future war." These were the fact that Lee "commanded a citizen army that had no basis whatever of professional soldiers," that he "had always an inadequate staff," and that there was "the greatest disparity in the efficiency of the three arms of service during the early period of his command." Freeman emphasized Lee's thorough knowledge of his human and physical materiel, his fairness and suavity in promoting the competent and removing the incompetent officers in his command, and his concern for the well-being of the men in the ranks as the keys to the Confederate commander's success in building and sustaining morale. He later added the spiritual leadership provided by Lee as another element that was in some ways "a summary and an epitome of all the others." He saw in the lack of this spiritual guidance the ultimate doom of Hitler's dream. "If the Reichwehr stands, we will have a long and dreadful war," he told his War College audience on October 26, 1939, "but one thing is certain: the compulsion that lies behind the Reichwehr now means chaos after the war." Freeman also emphasized the spiritual quality of Lee's leadership in his lecture "Lee as a Leader." He told the officers: "Lee had something more than a belief in the righteousness of his cause. Every soldier has that. Lee had a deeper spiritual feeling in the justice of God." Whether or not they always found

acceptance, Freeman's views on military leadership were familiar to a large number of the younger American commanders of World War II. Among the officers who attended the Army War College during Freeman's tenure as lecturer there were Mark W. Clark, Matthew B. Ridgway, Maxwell D. Taylor and Anthony C. McAuliffe.<sup>11</sup>

The young officers of the War College were also treated to guided tours of Virginia's battlefields led by Freeman, but these excursions were not limited to American officers alone. Freeman developed a friendship with General Friedrich von Boetticher, the German military attache in Washington during the 1930s, and accompanied the General on several battlefield trips. In the spring of 1940, he guided Life magazine photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt over the fields of Petersburg and tried to use the lessons of that campaign to predict future developments in the war in Europe. Photographs showed a re-enactment by CCC boys of the Confederate breakthrough attempt at Fort Stedman, Freeman surveying Federal entrenchments through fieldglasses from the Confederate picket line while his driver studies a

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<sup>11</sup>DSF, "Methods Employed by General Lee to Maintain Morale in the Army of Northern Virginia," Oct. 27, 1938 and Oct. 26, 1939 and "Lee as a Leader," Feb. 2, 1939. Transcripts of these and other of Freeman's War College lectures as well as lists of officers attending the College are in the collections of the United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. Other officers of note who attended the War College between 1936 and 1940 were future Air Force Generals George H. Brett, George E. Stratemayer and Hoyt S. Vandenberg and Pedro A. Del Valle and Clifton B. Cates of the United States Marine Corps.

map, and Freeman kneeling on the ground to illustrate with sticks and pine cones the final Federal breakthrough on April 2, 1865. Freeman's purpose, according to the accompanying text, "was to show that, against even the defensive fire-power of 1864-65, a break-through was nearly impossible. Grant did break through into Petersburg with his Federal troops but not before Lee had evacuated most of his exhausted army, marching them west to Appomattox and final surrender a week later." The text concluded with a quotation from a Freeman editorial of May 8: "The chances are that, similarly, there will be no break-through either by Germans or by Allies until losses have wasted one army or the other. Attrition may be the final, irresistible foe. With General Attrition will co-operate some new Sherman." Unfortunately for Freeman and the editors of Life, the magazine appeared on May 13, three days after the Germans launched the blitzkrieg in the West that swept through the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium and culminated in the fall of France just over a month later. Freeman had not been mindful enough of his own admonition that "circumstance is incommensurable."<sup>12</sup>

Yet if changed circumstances made dangerous too many

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<sup>12</sup>David Edward Herold, "A Species of Literary Lion: Essays on Morison, Freeman, DeVoto, and Becker and the Writing of History" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973), 60-62; "Virginia Editor Uses Civil War to Clarify War News from Europe," Life (May 13, 1940), 41-47; NL, May 8, 1940.

direct comparisons between the Civil War and World War II, the war of 1861-1865 still held modern applications in terms of military leadership. These lessons in leadership from the experiences of the Army of Northern Virginia Freeman sought to impart to modern American commanders in his second great historical work, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command. Though it might have appeared so later, Lee's Lieutenants was not a long-planned supplement to R. E. Lee. After completing work on the Lee biography, Freeman considered several projects before settling on the Lieutenants. For a time he considered writing a combined history and guidebook of Virginia. He and Mrs. Freeman, who had an active interest in historic sites and gardens, both felt that such a work was needed and would have big sales. Yet biography remained his first love, and he wrote Maxwell Perkins in October, 1934: "Last night, coming back from New York, I had a thought that perhaps before my race was run, I might write a 'Washington' and a 'Wilson' and would then have paid tribute to my three greatest Virginian heroes." Perkins replied that Scribner's would be delighted for Freeman to write both a biography of Washington and one of Wilson, but he realized that the latter would have to wait several years for all of the material to become available. He thought Freeman would be better suited for a Washington biography anyway, since such a study would be "largely a military life, and whatever else may be said about the Lee,

the accounts of the campaigns and battles, are I believe, excelled by no other writer on military matters." Freeman also briefly considered writing a life of Thomas Jefferson but abandoned that idea because his friend Dumas Malone was already at work on such a project. Eventually, he settled on a Washington and began collecting material for it. Yet somehow he felt that he had not completely fulfilled his pledge to tell the story of the Army of Northern Virginia. In order to give men such as Stonewall Jackson, James Longstreet and Ambrose Powell Hill their due, he conceived the idea of Lee's Lieutenants. He had already accumulated much of the necessary source material in his study of Lee, and Perkins was confident that the book would have an excellent sale, "with possibilities of a very large one." Given his increasing contacts with the leaders of America's military establishment, it is possible that Freeman already envisioned the Lieutenants as a valuable tool in preparing a new generation of American commanders. In any event, that soon became one of the major goals of his work.<sup>12</sup>

Freeman began work on Lee's Lieutenants while riding on a train through Connecticut on the morning of June 14, 1936. A month later, in a long letter to Max Perkins, he described the proposed scope and treatment of the work. In addition

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<sup>12</sup>DSF to M. E. Perkins, Jan. 25, Oct. 27, Jan. 12, 1935 and Perkins to DSF, Nov. 2, 1934, Jan. 11, 1935, June 11, 1936, all in DSFP-LC, Box 25; DSF to Louis V. Naisawald, July 2, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 71.



to Lee's well-known corps commanders, all the divisional commanders of the Army of Northern Virginia were to be included, with the length of treatment according "with the importance of each individual and the interest of his life." The most difficult problem presented by such a study was that of style of presentation. "I was determined not to follow the deadly, traditional style of separate sketches with no other nexus than that of common service in the Army of Northern Virginia," Freeman told Perkins. Rather, he decided to tie the story together around the theme of a continuing contest between rising and falling men. Figures would enter, leave and re-enter the stage at the appropriate points. Cross-references would make it possible for a reader to get a complete sketch of an individual's career without having to read the intervening material. Those who chose to read the complete narrative would find a dramatic story with the central theme of "ceaseless effort to find men of promise to take the place of those who had failed or fallen." After another month of work, Freeman's enthusiasm for the project was growing. "The book is to have a terribly tragic tone, I fear, because of the succession of difficulties and disappointments the Army of Northern Virginia had to encounter," he wrote Mr. Perkins on August 14, "but if I can tell it aright, it will be a tale to make

mens' hair stand on end."<sup>14</sup>

Now commenced the old struggle between author and editor to get the work into publication. Perkins had originally hoped to publish the Lieutenants in the fall of 1937, and Freeman seemed amenable. Yet in November, 1936, Freeman told Whitney Darrow of Scribner's: "I do not think you ought to count on it for the fall of 1937." Condensation and revision would make that deadline impossible. On February 7, 1938, he wrote again to Perkins: "With some regret, but in the belief the reasons for my action will appeal to you, I write to advise that 'Lee's Lieutenant[s]' will not be ready for publication until the fall of 1939." The main reason he gave was that he had determined that it was necessary to carry the story back from Lee's appointment to command to the original organization of the Confederate army in April, 1861. Without extensive treatment of the period prior to June, 1862, "the achievements of the Army during the Seven Days and the reorganization after the battles of June-July, 1862 are not understandable." A year later he wrote another letter to Perkins in which he predicted "a book of two volumes or one very large volume." If two, he thought it might still be possible to issue the first volume that fall, but the other could not appear until the autumn of 1940.

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<sup>14</sup>Diary of DSF, June 14, 1936, DSFP-LC; DSF to M. E. Perkins, July 15, Aug. 14, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 25.

Freeman explained that he had "uncovered all the unused maps of Jackson, two collections of his papers and tens of thousands of folios of his Topographical Engineer," all of which "put the Valley Campaign in an entirely different light." In addition, just as he despaired of getting new material on General William Dorsey Pender, the General's heirs "lent me two hundred fascinating war time letters."<sup>15</sup>

After his experience as editor of R. E. Lee, Perkins must have expected the delays that Freeman's thoroughness would cause. Yet neither he nor Freeman could have anticipated some of the distractions that would hinder progress on the Lieutenants. On May 26, 1938, while returning from a commencement address at the College of Charleston, Freeman's car was involved in an early morning accident with a Chevrolet truck six miles outside Fayetteville, North Carolina. Freeman's injuries were not serious, but his driver was killed and his oldest daughter, Mary Tyler, suffered a broken left leg that resulted in a nearly fatal embolism. Her recovery was complete but slow, and her father did not recover sufficiently from his injuries and anxiety to resume work until June 12. Just one year later brought the joyous but nonetheless distracting occasion of Mary Tyler's marriage to Mr. Leslie Cheek, Jr.

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<sup>15</sup>M. E. Perkins to DSF, June 11, 1936 and DSF to Perkins, June 12, 1936, both in DSFP-LC, Box 25; DSF to Whitney Darrow, Nov. 14, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 22; DSF to Perkins, Feb. 7, 1938, Feb. 7, 1939, both in DSFP-LC, Box 33.

of Nashville, Tennessee. In the meantime, Dr. Freeman lost two weeks of work in September, 1938 to moving his family into their new home, "Westbourne," on Harlan Circle in Richmond's fashionable West End. Most time-consuming of all was his agreement to deliver the inaugural Dancy Lectures at the Alabama State College for Women in April, 1939. Freeman began writing the series of three lectures on April 1 and completed them on April 24. He delivered the lectures at Montevallo on April 27-28, but his work was not done. The college expected the lectures to be published. Freeman did not realize this when he agreed to give the lectures, but on July 18, he set out with characteristic diligence to revise them for publication. This process took a month, and on August 18, 1939, he sent the manuscript off with a note to Max Perkins: "I kick myself for ever agreeing to publish the lectures. After I agreed, I had, of course, to put the things in decent form. That took more time from 'Lee's Lieutenants' than I cared to give." Nevertheless, the resulting volume, The South to Posterity: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939) was a valuable historiographical work that was widely and favorably reviewed. Stephen Vincent Benet praised it in the Saturday Review and used the occasion again to prod Freeman to write a biography of Washington: "Dr. Freeman remarks, with truth, 'Even the fame of George Washington would be enhanced if, among the

hundreds of books written of him, there were one first-class biography.' There is just one man to do that, and I will not embarrass Dr. Freeman by mentioning his name."<sup>14</sup>

Yet Washington would have to wait until Freeman's first-class scholarship had enhanced the fame of Lee's lieutenants. The coming of World War II and his chairmanship of the Virginia Defense Council made further demands on Freeman's time, but he pressed ahead. In his diary for 1941 he wrote under July 15: "Have decided that I will press the writing of this book to the limit of capacity in the hope that I can get it out in the autumn of 1942 when it may be of help to our army-officers." Two months later he reviewed his text of over 400,000 words and decided to issue one volume in the spring of 1942. The first volume, which carried the story through the end of the Seven Days' Campaign, was finally published in October, 1942. Volume II, which began with the Battle of Cedar Mountain and concluded with Lee's army starting out on its second invasion of the North, appeared the following spring. These volumes, each over 750 pages in length and priced at \$5, were received enthusiastically by an American public embroiled in a world war and eager for knowledge of past conflicts. As of April 12, 1943, Scribner's had sold nearly

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<sup>14</sup>Diary of DSF, May 24-June 12, Sept. 5-19, 1938, April 1-29, June 3, July 18-Aug. 17, 1939, DSFP-LC; DSF to M. E. Perkins, Aug. 18, 1939, DSFP-LC, Box 33; Saturday Review of Literature, Nov. 25, 1939.

30,000 copies of Volume I and 12,240 copies of Volume II. By November, 1945, sales of Volume I totalled 67,000 and those of Volume II over 50,000.<sup>17</sup>

Most reviews were glowing. The faithful Stephen Vincent Benet praised Volume I as "a military classic" and "vivid and fascinating narrative" in the New York Times Book Review. Fellow editor Josephus Daniels pronounced Volume II "another masterpiece that will live." Lloyd Lewis, writing in the Chicago News, called the first volume "a book for today, certainly important, and . . . a permanent milestone in America's study of the war which no other war can ever surpass in drama and fascination." Yet Lewis lamented that Freeman's consuming interest in Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia "is adding to the disproportionate position of Virginia in the South's memory of the war." Lewis also noted Freeman's tendency to romanticize the war. "The torments and obscenities, deviltries and exploits of the common soldiers, the humors and despairs of the privates, the scattered entrails and gnawing anguish of battlefields are not for him," Lewis said of Freeman. "His interest is in the personalities of the officers, and whenever it can honestly be said of any of them that they were social aristocrats, Freeman will be sure to say it." Bernard DeVoto, reviewing Volume I in the Saturday Review of

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<sup>17</sup>Diary of DSF, July 15, Sept. 15, 1941, DSFP-LC; Whitney Darrow to DSF, April 20, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 48 and Darrow to DSF, Nov. 13, 1945, DSFP-LC, Box 60.

Literature, called the book "a landmark in the study of the Civil War" and lauded the author for his fresh interpretations, especially that of Jackson's Valley Campaign. Yet DeVoto, like Lewis, had some reservations. Freeman had succeeded in "breaking through the convention of Southern military studies," but he had not managed altogether to free himself from it. "Just as vestiges of its rhetoric remain in his inversions, his 'ere's' and 'social glasses,' his ready use of 'gallant' and the number of Southern generals who look like eagles, so he cannot really bring himself to believe that there were armies and generals on the other side," DeVoto observed.<sup>10</sup>

Yet for every negative criticism he received from reviewers, Freeman received numerous personal congratulations for the first two volumes of Lee's Lieutenants. Richmond novelist Ellen Glasgow told him: "No other writer, living or dead, has been able to interpret so faithfully the life of this period and the mind of the Confederate South." Historian Allan Nevins wrote to congratulate him on Volume II, which he pronounced "a magnificent piece of history." J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton offered his congratulations and expressed the opinion that Freeman had "touched a higher mark in the second volume even than in the first, as high as that was." Freeman was most

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<sup>10</sup>New York Times Book Review, Oct. 25, 1942; Raleigh News and Observer, March 21, 1943; Chicago News, Dec. 2, 1942; Saturday Review of Literature, Oct. 24, 1942.

pleased with the commendations of professional soldiers, especially when they mentioned the book's usefulness in the present struggle. Brigadier General S. C. Godfrey of the Army Air Forces maintained that Lee's Lieutenants "ought to be compulsory reading for the officers from whom we are attempting to develop leaders." Major General John P. Lucas, who would soon meet with disappointment similar to that suffered by several of Lee's lieutenants, called the Lieutenants "exactly the kind of book that all officers of our present army should read as it gives a clear insight into the strengths and weaknesses of character of men who were engaged in the same type of desperate struggle in which we find ourselves at present." Most welcome of all, perhaps, were the compliments from General George C. Marshall, who as US Army Chief of Staff faced many of the same problems of command that had confronted Lee:

The summary in the first volume at the completion of the seven days' fight and that portion of the second volume leading up to the establishment of the Army of Northern Virginia on the heights at Fredericksburg, have been of definite value to me in my present occupation. As a matter of fact, to read of the vicissitudes of personalities with which Lee had to battle in the midst of a fast-moving campaign and early in his Army command career, has been very encouraging to me. I thought I had troubles of this nature but mine sink into insignificance compared to his. Also, there is great encouragement in the fact that we have so little of this bitter personal prejudice or attitude to deal with in the present war Army. Nevertheless, to one in my position the matter of personalities of higher commanders will always be a major consideration, having far more importance than



the blue-print solutions of Leavenworth and the War College would lead the student officer to anticipate.<sup>19</sup>

Had General Marshall been equally enthusiastic about Freeman's efforts to join the army, the author might have turned soldier after completing Volume II of Lee's Lieutenants. As it was, Freeman pressed on into Volume III, which he began writing on October 7, 1942. This third volume, in some ways the finest of all, demonstrated Freeman's willingness to modify, if not altogether change, previous opinions. In R. E. Lee, he had heaped most of the blame for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg upon the shoulders of General James Longstreet. In 1940 the General's widow asked Freeman if he would permit her to write a reply to his chapters on Longstreet and publish it as an appendix in his forthcoming study of Lee's lieutenants. Mrs. Longstreet acknowledged the unusual nature of this request but felt compelled to make it because "your unfairness to General Longstreet in your history of Lee has convinced me that it would not be possible for you to do justice to Longstreet's record, either as soldier or citizen." Freeman did not reply to Mrs. Longstreet, but he was more attentive to a letter he received in February, 1943

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<sup>19</sup>Ellen Glasgow to DSF, Oct. 24, 1942, DSFP-LC, Box 217; Allan Nevins to DSF, April 17, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 51; J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to DSF, April 5, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 50; S. C. Godfrey to DSF, May 1, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 49; John P. Lucas to DSF, March 19, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 50; George C. Marshall to DSF, April 7, [1943], DSFP-LC, Box 51.

from Mr. Runyon Colle of Newark, New Jersey. Colle, an amateur student of the Gettysburg Campaign, sent Freeman a detailed critique of that portion of R. E. Lee covering Longstreet's attack against the Union left on July 2, 1863. Making frequent references to the Official Records, Mr. Colle took issue with Freeman's contention that Longstreet's delay in delivering the assault was "fatal" to the success of Lee's plan. Colle questioned whether Lee even had a plan but cited evidence to show that Federal troops had already arrived in such numbers as to make a Confederate success virtually impossible at any time on July 2. In fact, he believed that Longstreet's delay was the only reason the attack was even partially successful, because in the interim Union General Daniel Edgar Sickles had moved his III Corps into an untenable position. Colle thought he had found the reason for Freeman's errors in the author's statement in The South to Posterity that the Southern Historical Society Papers had not been superseded by the Official Records. "Anyone steeping himself in the arguments in the Southern Historical Society papers, particularly Early's, is almost certain to be confused and misled," he wrote.<sup>20</sup>

In his response to Colle, Freeman warned against expecting Lee and his lieutenants "to have known all that we

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<sup>20</sup>Diary of DSF, Oct. 7, 1942, DSFP-LC; Helen Dortch Longstreet to DSF, Dec. 17, 1940, DSFP-LC, Box 38; Runyon Colle to DSF, Feb. 22, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 122.

know now," but he acknowledged that he might have relied too much upon Jubal Early's statements in the Southern Historical Society Papers. "The old man was a bitter partisan and did not hesitate to indulge special pleading when it was to his advantage," he wrote of "Old Jube." In a later letter, he conceded that the earlier volumes of the Papers, "while invaluable in many ways, contain statements that represent memory rather than fact." This was a large admission for Freeman to make, for he had long and intimate associations with the Southern Historical Society and had served as the Society's president since 1926. Colle's criticisms prompted Freeman to re-examine Gettysburg and Longstreet's role in the battle. He enlisted the aid of Dr. J. Walter Coleman, Superintendent of the Gettysburg National Military Park, Dr. Frederick Tilberg, Park Historian, and Harry W. Howerter, Jr., another amateur expert on the battle, and eventually produced an account that partially exonerated General Longstreet. "I still feel that he was sullen and uncooperative," he told Colle, "but I think far more is to be said in his defence than I or any other Southern writer yet has said."<sup>21</sup>

For his part, Harry Howerter wished that the controversy involving Longstreet could be put to rest for all times. "I don't think the present generation of

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<sup>21</sup>DSF to Runyon Colle, Feb. 25, 1943, Oct. 4, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 48.

American fighters will be much interested," he argued. Freeman's answer revealed some of the ambivalence that he often felt when writing of the Army of Northern Virginia. A major goal of his work was to celebrate the Confederate past, "to preserve from immolating time some of [the] heroic figures" of the Confederacy. Yet in all of his historical work, and especially in Lee's Lieutenants, he also sought to use the Civil War to convey military lessons to a new generation of American commanders. "It is a very difficult thing to know how far to go for the information of present day soldiers without appearing to be too critical," he told Mr. Howerter. "I have felt sometimes I was too severe on Longstreet, Pendleton, et al., but I have been encouraged by the assurance of General Marshall, Admiral King and others that a candid treatment of past problems of command helped them in their handling of present problems."<sup>22</sup>

Freeman often resolved the dilemma presented by his dual goals by criticizing first and celebrating later. In an article written at the time of the last great reunion of Confederate veterans in Richmond in 1932, he argued that Confederate leaders made a strategic mistake in moving the capital of the Confederacy from Montgomery, Alabama to Richmond. This decision "made the successful defence of

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<sup>22</sup>Harry W. Howerter, Jr. to DSF, July 5, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 122; DSF to Howerter, July 7, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 50.

Richmond the great object of Confederate strategy, even to the neglect of Vicksburg and the line of the Tennessee River. The Confederacy was reft in twain because the pride of the Administration made it hold Richmond at any price and to construct here the munition works that should have been placed far to the interior." Yet having said this, Freeman went on to celebrate the glory of the city's resistance and to praise the men who defended it. "Surely none can walk the old streets they trod, or read their letters or gaze on their relics in the Confederate Museum and not feel grateful that in that high tradition the humblest son of Richmond can spiritually keep the company of kings," he concluded. In Lee's Lieutenants, Freeman used this technique effectively in his treatment of General Stonewall Jackson, one of the greatest figures in the Confederate pantheon. Much of Freeman's early appraisal of General Jackson was not altogether favorable. He portrayed Jackson as a complex personality whose ambition made him a doubtful subordinate. He was even critical of certain aspects of Jackson's performance as an independent commander in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862, a campaign that had taken on almost mythic proportions. He criticized Jackson for his handling of his artillery on May 23, 1862 at Front Royal and for his improper organization of his cavalry. He charged that the General was not wise and successful in his handling of his officers. With less

certainty, Freeman asserted that Jackson's slowness in reaching a decision about an objective on May 24 cost him an opportunity to crush the opposing force of Nathaniel P. Banks. Finally, Freeman described Jackson's infantry tactics in the Valley Campaign as "routine" and "commonplace." The only praiseworthy feature he noted in Jackson's tactics was his "intelligent effort to co-ordinate the three arms of the service," and even that effort did not always succeed. Yet Freeman cited Jackson's "quick and sure sense of position," his "pronounced strategic sense, the components of which were secrecy and consequent surprise, superiority of force and sound logistics," and his ability to employ the initiative to impose his will on the enemy as the qualities that marked him as a soldier of highest promise. The promise went unfulfilled during the Seven Days' Campaign, but Jackson soon emerged as Lee's ablest lieutenant and the central figure of Freeman's second volume. Freeman's account of Jackson's death is one of the most moving passages in the entire work, and he named Jackson as the only one of Lee's lieutenants who could be "added to those of one's acquaintances, living or dead, real persons or the creation of literature, by whom one's personal philosophy of life is shaped beyond understanding." Jackson's "strong, stern character" may have lacked beauty, but it had "unextinguishable vitality." He was undeniably "a personality distinguishable in the largest American

company." Thus, the military expert could read in detail of Jackson's flaws and failures, but the impression left with the reader was one of greatness.<sup>22</sup>

Only one figure in Lee's Lieutenants stood above reproach, and that was Lee himself. Even in lifting some of the blame for the Gettysburg defeat from the broad shoulders of Longstreet, Freeman did not place much of the burden upon Lee. Rather, he dispersed the blame among several other lieutenants, chiefly J. E. B. Stuart and Richard S. Ewell. Freeman was careful to show that Lee was always the architect of strategy in the Virginia theatre of operations. After Jackson's death and the wounding of Longstreet, the commanding general had often to control tactics as well. During the last year of the war, with his ablest lieutenants dead or incapacitated, Lee himself held the army together largely through his strength of character. In the Introduction to Volume III, Freeman presented his final evaluation of Lee: "In the evils he prevented, as surely as in his positive military achievements; when seen through the eyes of his subordinates as certainly as when one looks at him across the table in his tent, he is a great soldier and a great man. Twenty years' study of him confirms and

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<sup>22</sup>DSF, "The Confederate Tradition of Richmond," Civil War History (Dec., 1957), 369-73; DSF, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command (New York, 1942-44), I, xx, xlii, 83, 470-85, 655-59, 735-39, II, xlii, xv-xvi, xlii, 666-82, III, xxv.

deepens every conviction of that."<sup>24</sup>

In fact, it had been nearly 30 years since the young newspaper editor had first contracted to write the life of Lee. Now, on May 30, 1944, at 6:05 p.m., "in the presence of dear friends," Freeman finished Lee's Lieutenants "and concluded 29 years work to preserve the record of our fathers of the Army of Northern Virginia." The Lieutenants alone had taken nearly eight years to complete. According to Freeman's careful calculations, he had devoted a total of 7121 hours to the project. He received the first copy of Volume III on September 13, and on the following Saturday, he gave a dinner in honor of Stewart Bryan, to whom he presented the first complete set of the Lieutenants. The book was dedicated "to John Stewart Bryan, who has kept the faith."<sup>25</sup>

Freeman, too, had kept faith with his subject and with himself. Since the day in 1903 when he had first resolved to write the story of the Army of Northern Virginia, he had never once doubted that the story was a heroic and dramatic one. And despite illness, injury and the myriad demands of an incredibly busy life, he had never doubted that he would make good his resolve. His faith was rewarded with brisk sales, large royalties and critical acclaim. Yet the inner rewards gained from living with his heroes, especially the

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., xxiv-xxv, 168-89.

<sup>25</sup>Diary of DSF, May 30, Sept. 13, Sept. 16, 1944, DSFP-LC.



incomparable Lee, probably outweighed all material ones. With Lee's Lieutenants, too, came the satisfaction of a patriotic duty performed. Nothing could have pleased Freeman more than hearing that Admirals Ernest J. King and Chester W. Nimitz found instruction and comfort in reading of the problems of command in the Army of Northern Virginia or that General Omar N. Bradley spent much of his spare time in the days before the Normandy invasion reading the first two volumes of the Lieutenants. One of Freeman's prized possessions was a partially burned copy of Volume III sent to him by an airman who had had it with him when his plane was hit by flak on a bombing run from Guam to Tokyo. Though denied an active military role, Freeman had, through his monumental "study in command," made his own contribution to the war effort in America's greatest conflict.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Chester W. Nimitz to DSF, Dec. 19, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 57; Ernest J. King to DSF, Aug. 29, 1944, Ernest J. King Papers, Library of Congress; Connelly, The Marble Man, 141. The charred copy of Volume III is in DSFP-LC, Box 229.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHANGING OVER

Douglas Freeman completed work on his chronicle of the Army of Northern Virginia just a week before the greatest military force America ever assembled landed in Normandy to begin the liberation of Europe from the Nazis. The term "liberation" was Freeman's own contribution to the vocabulary of World War II, a fact President Roosevelt readily acknowledged in a personal letter. As the Allied armies swept across Hitler's "Festung Europa," Freeman continued to keep his readers and listeners well informed of military developments. He praised the Allies' successes, such as the drive to the Seine, but cautioned against overoptimism. When the Allied forces suffered setbacks, such as occurred during Operation MARKET-GARDEN and the early stages of the Battle of the Bulge, Freeman offered words of assurance. He took a more personal interest in the war in the Pacific, for his son James Douglas served the United States Navy in that theatre. Freeman directed his harshest editorial comments not at the Germans or the Japanese but at those he perceived as enemies on the home front. At the top of his list of enemies stood John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers. At the end of a long coal miners' strike in 1943, the News Leader maintained that if "an agitator in the armed forces of the

United States" had been as defiant and disdainful of the wartime necessities of the country as had Lewis, "he would be behind the bars by now." Freeman was also critical of Roosevelt's handling of the strike. "If the President does not go to the absolute limit in dealing with these strikers, he should be impeached," he argued.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his disgust at Roosevelt's failure to deal effectively with Lewis, Freeman endorsed FDR's bid for a fourth term. Many Southerners were troubled by the efforts of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt on behalf of civil rights for blacks and by the leftist tendencies of Vice President Henry Agard Wallace, whom Freeman referred to privately as "that Jackass." Talk of a separate Southern Democratic party began to circulate early in 1944, and Freeman lashed out at the notion. "Nothing could be worse for America or for the South than to make politics regional," he contended. Freeman sincerely hoped that the President would drop Wallace from the ticket, but he warned against pressing too hard on the matter lest Roosevelt feel compelled to make the Iowan's re-nomination a test of loyalty to the New Deal. When Wallace was dropped in favor of Senator Harry Truman of Missouri, Freeman expressed satisfaction. He had written to Truman several months earlier that he "could wish nothing better for the Democratic Party than that you should

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin D. Roosevelt to DSF, May 31, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 58; NL, May 1, May 5, May 7, June 21, June 22, Nov. 6, 1943, May 2, May 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 30, Dec. 23, 1944.

be Mr. Roosevelt's running-mate." Now he commended Truman to his readers as a "modest, friendly, simple, quiet and normal" man who "would not disappoint" should he be thrust into the presidency by Roosevelt's death. For Freeman, the paramount issue of the campaign was not the New Deal or even the war, but rather the coming peace. As an ardent Wilsonian, he based his hopes for a lasting peace on an agency of international cooperation in which the United States would play a leading role. He feared that FDR would encounter major difficulties in dealing with isolationists in the Senate, but he had no faith whatsoever that Republican nominee Thomas Dewey would be able to defeat isolationist opposition. Freeman questioned Dewey's intellectual honesty in any event and attributed the young New Yorker's apparent willingness to misrepresent his views to his training as a prosecuting attorney. Thus, after weighing all of these considerations, the News Leader officially endorsed Roosevelt and Truman on October 31, 1944. Later that day Freeman wrote to his son: "I never expected the time would come when I would write of the reelection of Roosevelt and not express resentment at the extravagances of his administration. War changes all things."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Jan. 10, Jan. 18, July 15, July 22, Oct. 31, 1944; DSF to Andrew Christian, June 20, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 54; DSF to Harry S Truman, April 28, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 58; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Oct. 24, 1944 and DSF to James Douglas Freeman, Oct. 31, 1944, both in DSFP-LC, Box 55.

The end of the war left a changed and battered world, and Freeman soon had a unique opportunity to view it firsthand. In September, 1945, less than a month after Japan's surrender ended the world's costliest war, he received an invitation to accompany a party led by Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy on a trip around the world. The purpose of the trip was to discuss problems of postwar civil and military government, and Freeman used the opportunity to talk with many of the leading American commanders of World War II. He was already contemplating a history of American command in the Second World War along the lines of Lee's Lieutenants, and his tour included discussions with Generals Eisenhower and MacArthur and Admirals Nimitz and Spruance. The party left the United States on September 28 and flew to London. Paris was next on the agenda, followed by Frankfurt am Main. In Frankfurt Freeman spent over an hour in confidential discussion with Eisenhower and had an equally frank dinner conversation with Averill Harriman, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's chief of staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, allowed Freeman access to headquarters records, and on October 6 Freeman recorded in his diary the "unspeakable thrill of reading the German Generals' statements on what happened in Normandy and during the battle of the Bulge." From Frankfurt the party moved on to Vienna, where Freeman discussed the Italian campaign with General Mark W. Clark.

After an evening in Vienna, it was on to Budapest, which Freeman described as "the first European city with a smile." At a luncheon in the Hungarian capital, he exchanged toasts with a Red Army marshal, who was impressed with the American's knowledge of the Russian campaigns. The next stop was Cairo, where Freeman saw the "Indescribable" relics of King Tut's tomb. Karachi, New Dehli, Calcutta and Kunming followed. In Chungking Freeman dined with General Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang. Shanghai, Tientsin and Peking completed the tour of China, then McCloy's party flew over the "hideous wreckage" of Hiroshima to Tokyo. During the week in the capital of Japan, General MacArthur extended the same privileges to Freeman that Eisenhower had. After leaving Tokyo, the group stopped at "sombre and thrilling" Iwo Jima, where Freeman rode to the top of Mount Suribachi and viewed the entire terrain of the battlefield. Back on American soil at Pearl Harbor, Freeman discussed the naval war with Admiral Nimitz. McCloy's entourage returned to New York on November 2. Three days later Freeman was back at his desk at the News Leader office and reflecting upon the most enlightening and stimulating weeks of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Back at work Freeman turned his editorial attention to the problems of the postwar world. He was particularly

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<sup>3</sup>NL, Sept. 28, Sept. 29, Oct. 18, Oct. 23, 1945; Diary of DSF, Sept. 28-Nov. 5, 1945, DSFP-LC.

concerned about the field of foreign affairs as relations between the United States and the Soviet Union rapidly deteriorated. Freeman lamented the breakdown of American-Soviet cooperation after the end of the war in Europe, and he was becoming increasingly alarmed by the belligerent attitude of many Americans toward their recent ally. He had difficulty restraining his anger when several "old possums" in his Current Events Class advocated that the United States use the atomic bomb against the uncooperative Soviets. Freeman explained that there had never been a new weapon of war that one nation had been able to keep for itself and argued that threatening to use the atomic bomb was even worse than threatening to use poison gas. "But, I am sorry to say, there are some fools in the world who are willing to use both," he told his son. "May God have mercy on us if these men ever get in control." Yet he did not believe that the United States should destroy its atomic arsenal until the Soviets showed a willingness to cooperate in the control of atomic energy. "The future of atomic warfare rests with Russia," Freeman wrote at the end of 1946. "She can assure by honest cooperation the destruction of every atomic bomb she professes to think we shall use against her, or she can force America, however reluctantly, into the continued development of atomic energy and of long-range carrier planes in order to make it certain that if New York is destroyed by a surprise attack, a dozen

great cities of the aggressor will be turned into rubble as soon as our planes can make the flight."<sup>4</sup>

The United States entered this dangerous new world under the leadership of Harry S Truman, who had assumed the presidency after the death of Franklin Roosevelt. Freeman's early confidence in Truman eroded almost as rapidly as Soviet-American relations. When the President announced a new foreign policy that became known as the Truman Doctrine, Freeman wrote a critical editorial that Senator Harry Byrd ordered printed in the Congressional Record. "The new foreign policy undoubtedly commits the United States to be the anti-Communist policeman of the world and the guardian of every government that professes itself threatened when we adjudge it free," the editor argued. He saw the new policy as an attempt to short-circuit the United Nations. "If America contemptuously disregards the United Nations when it suits her to do so, how can she expect other nations to respect us when their special interests are involved?" he asked. Though he did not question Truman's motives, he believed the President had made "a most dangerous mistake." In Freeman's opinion, true democracy was dead for at least a generation in Eastern Europe and the Near East. In neither of those regions nor in the Far East could the United States

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<sup>4</sup>DSF to S. L. Denison, June 7, 1945, DSFP-LC, Box 62; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Sept. 25, 1945, DSFP-LC, Box 61; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, March 22, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 68; NL, Dec. 31, 1946.



play an effective role in defeating anti-democratic forces. "Such help as we can give, we should devote to France and to the British Commonwealth of Nations," Freeman concluded. "Instead of bypassing the United Nations we should use the organization to the utmost and should seek to upbuild it. Our legislation best will be shaped to future emergency if it is concentrated on peace and on our own defense."<sup>2</sup>

As a fiscally conservative Virginian, Freeman was especially troubled by the financial implications of Truman's foreign policy. He eventually voiced grudging editorial support for American aid to Greece and Turkey, but he insisted that the public had "a right to know where, how and on what principles the Truman doctrine is to be applied elsewhere." If the American taxpayer was to pay the piper, he had a right to call the tune. The heavy expenditures called for under the Marshall Plan alarmed Freeman even more. Despite his deep respect for General Marshall, he feared that the European Recovery Plan would place a terrific burden on American taxpayers for largely undefined purposes. He denounced the vagueness and secrecy with which State Department officials cloaked the plan and declared that he would not purchase a tomcat or a second hand lawn mower without more specifications than the State Department had provided. "The more I study the Marshall Plan, the more

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<sup>2</sup>Congressional Record, March 14, 1947; NL, March 13, 1947.

do I find myself compelled regretfully to believe that it is half-baked," he told Harry Byrd, who voted against the plan in the Senate.<sup>4</sup>

As the Cold War intensified in 1948, Freeman came to fear the possible consequences of Truman's hardline stance against the Soviets in Berlin. He did not want to yield anything to Communism, a philosophy that he believed was built on hate, but he cautioned against letting Berlin become a symbol that obscured America's greater objectives. "It is the European civilization and not the western suburbs of Berlin that we must defend," he wrote. "It well might happen that we would lose Europe in trying to save Berlin." He did not believe that the evacuation of Berlin would make the loss of all Europe inevitable. When the administration kept up its aggressive posture, he continued to denounce the dangerous sword-rattling of the President and his advisors. "It begins to look as if our case is one of holding on until we can get rid of General Marshall and President Truman, whose policy toward Russia is stubborn to the point of being provocative," he told Allen Freeman in the summer of 1948. Yet despite his concern, Freeman gave no indication that he was any nearer despair than he had been a year earlier when he told his brother: "I have not for a

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 14, June 13, 1947, Jan. 3, Jan. 8, Jan. 9, Jan. 12, Jan. 27, 1948; DSF to Robert A. Taft, Jan. 16, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 93; DSF to Charles F. Cole, Jan. 9, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 86; DSF to Harry F. Byrd, Jan. 22, Jan. 24, Jan. 31, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 85.

moment lost faith in the assurance that somehow we shall muddle through. . . . I suppose we sons of the Confederacy have got more faith in the future than most Americans have."<sup>7</sup>

While Freeman kept his faith in the future, he had almost completely lost faith in Harry Truman's ability to lead the United States into the second half of the 20th century. If he regarded Truman's foreign policy as dangerous, he believed the President's domestic policies were unfair and potentially ruinous. He considered the growing power and arrogance of organized labor to be a grave threat to the nation and was sharply critical of the Democrat-controlled Congress when it failed to restrain labor. When a Republican-controlled Congress did take action against labor by passing the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, Truman vetoed the bill and incurred Freeman's editorial wrath. Freeman also joined Senator Byrd in decrying Truman's proposed budget for 1948 and the taxes needed to fund it. "Mr. Truman recommends a fiscal policy that [is] inflationary and impractical, unjust and shortsighted," he wrote in January. "He proposes to whip a panting horse and to demand an uphill gallop with a heavy

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<sup>7</sup>NL, March 19, July 20, 1948; DSF to James B. Munn, Nov. 13, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 71; DSF to Robert Maynard, July 23, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 90; DSF to Mrs. Cavour Landon Truesdale, July 31, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 93; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Aug. 9, Aug. 30, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 88; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Aug. 19, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 78.

load." The federal budget needed to be attacked with an axe, not merely a pruning hook. If the budget were not cut, federal income taxes would become ever more burdensome. Freeman already regarded heavy taxation as "the supreme threat to the attainment of a man's ambition to advance his family" and urged taxpayers to organize in protest lest they "have to labor solely as the slaves of a society that makes ability a handicap, regards energy as a liability and imposes a penalty on every display of effort."<sup>2</sup>

In criticizing reckless spending and punitive taxation and denouncing the marriage of labor and government, Freeman was sounding essentially the same anti-New Deal themes he had used for a dozen years. Yet he had endorsed each of Franklin Roosevelt's bids for re-election largely because he trusted FDR's experienced hand at guiding the nation's foreign policy in a dangerous world. With his trust in Harry Truman's foreign policy no greater than his regard for New Deal domestic policy, Freeman was at last ready to abandon his long-standing support for the Democratic party at the national level.

For many Southerners the major issue in the election of

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<sup>2</sup>NL, Jan. 5, May 11, May 14, May 15, Dec. 2, Dec. 9, 1946, June 21, 1947, Jan. 8, Jan. 12, Feb. 7, Feb. 17, 1948. Freeman's correspondence for the period 1946-1948 contains many critical references to postwar labor problems. His most caustic comments were still reserved for John L. Lewis, with his sternest statement coming in a letter to Allen Freeman on April 24, 1946: "The sooner [Lewis] dies, the better for America." (DSFP-LC, Box 68).

1948 was not taxes or federal spending or labor or foreign policy. Rather, the key issue emerged on February 2, 1948, when President Truman sent to Congress a series of proposals designed to advance civil rights for black Americans.

Although his proposals contained little that was new or radical, Southern outcry against Truman was swift and loud. Virginia's leading Democrats, Senator Harry Byrd and Governor William M. Tuck, reacted mildly at first but were soon at work on a plan to keep Truman's name off the ballot in November. Under the terms of this so-called "Anti-Truman Bill," which Governor Tuck presented to the General Assembly on February 26, Virginia voters would merely vote for presidential electors under the name of the party of their choice. A state party convention or a party committee would actually determine the candidate for whom the electors would cast their ballots. Senator Byrd heartily endorsed Tuck's extraordinary proposal and was joined in his commendation by Representative Howard Smith and Lieutenant Governor L. Preston Collins. Yet the reaction of most Virginia politicians and newspaper editors was overwhelmingly negative. No newspaperman denounced the proposal more fervently than did Freeman. He believed that Truman's civil rights bill was "unwise" and designed to cater to the black vote, but he held out the hope that the bill would be defeated or that enforcement would be frustrated even if the bill were enacted. Yet even if these

hopes should prove vain, "Virginians still should cry 'Never' in answer to the Governor." If the Governor's bill were passed, Freeman concluded, the next appropriate step would be to remove the motto "Sic Semper Tyrannis" from the state seal, for the Old Dominion would be "riveting, not breaking, the chains of political slavery." The following day the News Leader used bold type to continue its denunciation of the proposal: "It is YOU, free Virginian, it is YOU, a thinking, freeborn individual, whose rights are to be infringed. Rise up to defend YOUR rights." Freeman urged Virginians to vow never to vote again for any man who supported the machine's effort to limit "in any manner or degree your complete freedom to vote AS YOU PLEASE!" At the end of February, the bill was amended, but Freeman warned his readers to keep up their guard and to let their legislators "know that you understand the implications and the evil possibilities of this plan and that you will not consent to ANY LIMITATION OF YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF YOUR CHOICE -- YOUR CHOICE AND NOT THE STATE CONVENTION'S."<sup>9</sup>

As finally passed, the Tuck election bill allowed

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<sup>9</sup>James R. Sweeney, "The Golden Silence: The Virginia Democratic Party and the Presidential Election of 1948," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, (July, 1974), 351-58; William Bryan Crawley, Jr., Bill Tuck: A Political Life in Harry Byrd's Virginia (Charlottesville, 1978), 135-53; J. Harvie Wilkinson III, Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966 (Charlottesville, 1968), 79-80; NL, Feb. 27, Feb. 28, March 1, 1948.

Truman's name to appear on the ballot, but opposition to the President continued strong in Virginia and the rest of the South. Three days after the Democratic National Convention nominated Truman, dissident Southerners convened in Birmingham, Alabama and organized the States' Rights Democratic party. Popularly known as the Dixiecrats, this party adopted a segregationist platform and nominated Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for President. Freeman was thoroughly disgusted with Truman and was no more enthused with Republican nominee Thomas Dewey than he had been four years earlier. Yet he was strongly opposed to the formation of a separate Southern party. "The remedy of the South is not to wave the Confederate flag or to profane the picture of General Lee," he wrote on July 19. "Nor are self-respect, service and security advanced by separation and the organization of a regional party." He argued that Southerners should honestly admit that they had erred in delaying too long basic political rights for blacks and should adopt some of Truman's civil rights proposals at the state level. When Southerners had to protest, their action should be founded on reason and valid argument, not on the debasement of their inheritance. The spirit of General Lee should be "displayed in the classrooms at Lexington, not in the convention hall at Birmingham." Freeman concluded: "We must not make the Confederacy another Jacobite cause. Nothing should we more diligently shun than

action that will make us the Bretons or the Basques of our side of the Atlantic."<sup>10</sup>

Senator Byrd maintained a "golden silence" during the campaign, as he refused to endorse or campaign for any candidate. Independent Democrats saw a chance to discredit the machine by working actively for the national Democratic ticket and formed the Straight Democratic Ticket Committee for that purpose. Some machine men openly endorsed Truman, as well. As Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond put it: "The only sane and constructive course to follow is to remain in the house of our fathers -- even though the roof leaks and there may be bats in the belfry, rats in the pantry, a cockroach waltz in the kitchen, and skunks in the parlor." Support for the Democratic party was part of the faith that Douglas Freeman had acquired in the house of his own father, but his disgust with Truman was so great that he could not endorse the national ticket. Yet the pull of old loyalties remained strong, and he could not bring himself to endorse the Republican ticket, either, especially since he still had reservations about Dewey. In the end, the News Leader made no official endorsement. "The choice is between evils, known and unknown," Freeman explained to his readers on October 28. Privately, he determined at last to vote for Dewey and to "do it cheerfully and hopefully." In explaining his decision to his daughter Anne, he revealed

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., July 19, 1948.



both his willingness to change political loyalties and the historical consciousness that made such change difficult. "It is a good sign when Southern people no longer are under the thralldom of political resentment," he wrote. "The climax of reconstruction was precisely eighty years ago, nearly three generations, but some Southerners seem to think they ought now to shape their policy by what was done in that distant date by men dead and in hell for perhaps fifty years." Then he conceded that perhaps "that 'in hell' is itself an echo of the very resentment I am denouncing."<sup>11</sup>

Freeman was as stunned as anyone by the outcome of the election. Although he believed that Truman's shocking victory and the election of a Democratic Congress meant "more than ever that our economic order is doomed," he reassured his daughter that he had "not for one moment lost faith in America merely because of this reversal." Yet he had lost faith in the leadership of the national Democratic party. He believed that General Dwight David Eisenhower was the only man who could provide the leadership the nation desperately needed, and when Eisenhower accepted the Republican nomination in 1952, Freeman publicly endorsed a Republican candidate for President.<sup>12</sup>

At the time he was switching political loyalties,

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<sup>11</sup>Sweeney, "The Golden Silence," 369-71; Crawley, Bill Tuck, 172-74; Wilkinson; Harry Byrd, 80; NL, Oct. 28, 1948; DSF to Anne B. Freeman, Nov. 2, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 88.

<sup>12</sup>NL, Nov. 3, 1948; DSF to Anne B. Freeman, Nov. 3, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 88.

Freeman was seriously considering another major change. As early as the summer of 1947, he had begun to contemplate retirement from his editorial and broadcasting duties. He would not reach retirement age until 1951, but he hoped to persuade the News Leader's publishers to allow him to retire early. Stewart Bryan had died in 1944, and Freeman was now the "old man" at the News Leader offices. Moreover, since the end of World War II, he had come increasingly to regard newspaper work as "drudgery." Never a crusading editor, he did muster a considerable amount of ire against Governor Tuck's "Anti-Truman Bill," but overall the strength of his editorials declined as his interest waned. At some point during 1948, Freeman listed for himself the pros and cons of retirement. Among the reasons he gave for wanting to retire was his desire "to do all the things I want to do before I am too old to enjoy them or to do them well." First and foremost among these things was his historical writing, which included not only his current project, a massive biography of George Washington, but also a projected study of American command in World War II. He also listed as reasons for retirement the probability that he faced "a dull period of confused public policy during which little is to be accomplished that will be either useful or interesting" and his desire not "to stay until I am esteemed the voice of a dead generation." First among the arguments against retirement was his fear that the News Leader's

publishers, David Tennant Bryan and John Dana Wise, might "drift into so reactionary a view" that the paper would cease to do its full measure of public service. Yet as the elder statesman of the News Leader's staff, he already felt that his influence in shaping editorial policy was waning. Freeman also perceived that his possible successor was not "ripe" as yet. Financial considerations also weighed against early retirement. Finally, toward the end of 1948, Freeman began to smooth the way for his retirement. Young James Jackson Kilpatrick, who had been with the News Leader staff since 1941, became associate editor and began receiving Freeman's close tutelage. After securing additional funding from the Carnegie Corporation to help with his research expenses on his biography of Washington, Freeman formally requested that he be permitted to retire as of July 1, 1949. With some reluctance, Tennant Bryan accepted Freeman's decision. The official announcement appeared in the News Leader on June 25.<sup>12</sup>

Even though his editorials had lost some of their force in the postwar years, Freeman left the News Leader at the peak of his influence and popularity with the public. His knowledge of foreign affairs was so widely respected in the

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<sup>12</sup>DSF to Raymond B. Fosdick, Sept. 11, 1947 and DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Sept. 16, 1947, both in DSFP-LC, Box 78; DSF, personal notes, [1948], DSFP-LC, Box 101; DSF to D. Tennant Bryan, May 3, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 95; Bryan to DSF, May 3, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 104; Kilpatrick, "Richmond Stayed Staid," 204; NL, June 25, 1949, June 15, 1953.

Old Dominion that Virginia Senator A. Willis Robertson urged President Truman to appoint him as Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Freeman did not want the job but admitted that he would have to give it serious consideration if it were offered. He did not get the appointment, but he did receive a large volume of mail from Virginians who seconded Senator Robertson's nomination. Freeman's influence was also felt in the Governor's mansion. Shortly after the fight over the "Anti-Truman Bill," Governor Tuck complained to Harry Byrd: "I resent orders from Freeman passed down through Robertson and [Representative J. Vaughan] Gary." Yet Governor Tuck was one of many admirers who expressed regret at Freeman's retirement. "I want you to know that while I recognize the value which you are rendering this and future generations by your historical writings, it is with real regret that I must now disassociate you from my reading the News Leader," Tuck told Freeman. "I know this feeling is shared by an untold number of others who daily have turned to your editorial columns for thoughtful and helpful comments on affairs of the day." The Winchester Evening Star, edited by Harry F. Byrd, Jr., also expressed a sense of loss at Freeman's retirement. "Newspaper work in Virginia will not seem the same without Dr. Freeman," wrote the younger Byrd. "His pen was the sharpest, the most concise, sometimes the blithest, and frequently the kindest of any of his contemporaries. His influence has been immense; he has fought hard and

skillfully for his economic and political philosophy."<sup>14</sup>

Typically, Freeman did not consider his new status as retirement but rather as a "changing over" to allow more time for historical work. He continued to speak out on public questions, both in the radio broadcasts that he continued from his home and in numerous speeches and articles. Yet his "change-over" marked the end of a long and important phase of his busy life.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Feb. 17, 1947; DSF to Harry F. Byrd, Feb. 19, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 76; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Feb. 24, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 78; William M. Tuck to Harry F. Byrd, May 26, 1948, William Munford Tuck Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary; Tuck to DSF, July 5, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 99; Winchester Evening Star, June 29, 1949.

## CHAPTER XV

### EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION: THE QUESTION OF RACE

During his long tenure as editor of the News Leader, Douglas Freeman saw a multitude of public men and issues come and go. The New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson gave way to the "Normalcy" of Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge, followed by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and Harry Truman's Fair Deal. Two German empires fell, and the Iron Curtain fell across Europe. Even Virginia's Democratic machine underwent some changes. Yet for Freeman and other Southerners of his generation, one issue was a constant. That was the issue of race. The race question was not often one of the highest priority during the years of Freeman's editorship, but it was always lurking just beneath the surface. Freeman was cautious on the race issue, but he advocated improved living conditions for blacks within the South's segregated system. Like many other Southern editors, his liberalism stopped short of endorsing an end to segregation. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Freeman rarely discussed race relations in his personal correspondence. Since most of his views on race were expressed in his editorials, it is often difficult, as John Gignilliat has pointed out, to separate Freeman's personal beliefs from what he thought would be acceptable to his fellow white Virginians. Still, it is possible to

distinguish an evolutionary pattern in some of Freeman's thinking about race.<sup>1</sup>

Freeman's attitude toward Virginia's black citizens was often patronizing, but his racial views were typical of the "separate-but-equal" brand of racial liberalism that emerged in the early 20th century and differed from traditional paternalism in that it stressed the importance of blacks becoming self-reliant citizens. From the very beginning of his editorship, Freeman advocated better living conditions and improved education for Virginia's black population. In the early years, he based his appeal on the need to preserve harmony between the races and on the need to maintain an adequate black labor force in Virginia. "If two races are to live side by side in peace, justice must be done. This is an old, old maxim that admits of no qualification," he wrote in 1916. "And justice applies to municipal improvements as well as to legal rights. Besides all this, we cannot afford to lower the efficiency of the negro labor of this city. . . . Nothing that we can do will add more to the efficiency of our negro labor than to house it decently." After the wave of racial violence that swept

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<sup>1</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 287-88. For a discussion of other Southern editors and the issue of race, see Morton Sosna, In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue (New York, 1977); Charles W. Eagles, Jonathan Daniels and Race Relations: The Evolution of a Southern Liberal (Knoxville, 1982); and John T. Kneebone, Southern Liberal Journalists and the Issue of Race, 1920-1944 (Chapel Hill, 1985).

much of the nation after World War I, Freeman congratulated Richmond on its record of racial tranquillity, but he coupled his praise with a warning that continued peace depended upon continued improvement in black living conditions:

If Richmond people analyze correctly the tasks that confront the negroes of America, Richmond will find that those tasks can best be discharged by a people strong in body and in mind. It follows that the physical and intellectual upbuilding of the colored race, coupled with the promotion of religion, is the best service that can be rendered the negroes. . . . The colored schools of Richmond can be improved and should be improved. The streets in the negro districts can be made better. Sanitation can reduce the mortality from tuberculosis and adequate training can save many a colored mother from the loss of her baby. Street-car facilities, too, can be provided as soon as more reasonable fares are allowed. . . . Justice yields larger dividends than anything in the world, for justice is righteousness.

Race relations in Virginia remained generally peaceful, but ever-larger numbers of blacks were leaving the South for better opportunities in the North. Freeman denied that blacks would truly find greater happiness in the North, but he again stressed the importance of improving their living conditions as the best means of keeping them as a reliable source of labor. "It is traditional in the South to complain of the shortcomings of the negro as a worker," he wrote in 1923. "The truth is, he usually is steady, industrious and little disposed to strikes or murmurings. The actual outlay in making life a little brighter for him and in assuring him a better home is as nothing compared



with the cost of attempting to replace him or to do without him."<sup>2</sup>

Just as he believed that improved public education was the key to improving the lives of white Southerners, Freeman saw education as the most vital element in the effort to mold Southern blacks into self-reliant citizens. And just as he often supplemented his editorial appeals for improved white education with personal involvement, he also took an active role in working to improve education for blacks. In 1934 the News Leader established a scholarship for deserving students to attend Virginia Union University, a black school in Richmond. In 1936 Freeman was elected to the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board, and for the next 15 years he worked with the Board to improve education for both blacks and whites in the South.<sup>3</sup>

Freeman also devoted much effort to securing for black citizens equal treatment before the law. First and foremost this meant putting an end to lynching. Freeman was proud of Virginia's good record on lynching in the early years of the 20th century, but when the state witnessed half a dozen incidents of extralegal killings between 1918 and 1926, he reacted with outrage. He blamed a lynching in Wise County

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<sup>2</sup>Sosna, In Search of the Silent South, 18-19; NL, Sept. 19, 1916, Jan. 1, 1919, June 22, 1920, April 17, May 23, 1923.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1934; DSF to Jackson Davis, April 27, 1936, DSFP-LC, Box 22; Edouard Eller to DSF, Dec. 26, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 106.

in 1920 largely on the fact that a similar incident two years earlier had gone unpunished and demanded that Governor Westmoreland Davis order an immediate investigation. He was even more strident in his demand that law enforcement officers do all in their power to prevent lynchings, "even at the risk of their lives." If an officer failed to protect a man in his custody from a lynch mob, "he ought to be removed and disbarred permanently from public employment." When another lynching took place in Wytheville in 1926, Freeman expressed humiliation as well as outrage. "A drunken mob of savages on a South Sea island could not have been more brutal," he declared. "Russian 'reds' in the maddest frenzy of their irreligious revolution would have hesitated at such cruelty. Done in the name of 'white supremacy,' this crime disgraces a commonwealth that has boasted the patient honesty of its justice." Freeman invoked the comparison with Russia again in a scathing denunciation of a lynching that occurred in Mississippi in 1927. After reporting another wave of political executions carried out by the Soviet government, he scornfully described the incident in Mississippi:

While the type was still chattering at the cold horror of the Russian crime, a mob at Louisville, Miss., takes two negroes from the sheriff, who has just arrested them for the alleged murder of a mill superintendent. The negroes are paraded through the streets in open daylight, are carried a short distance from the town and are tied to a telegraph pole. Then the inheritors of Magna Carta and the common law, the apostles of Blackstone and

the free citizens of a righteous republic that refuses to have any dealings with Soviet Russia, put gasoline over the writhing bodies of the two men, apply matches and stand back to watch two human beings die of this hideous torture. And when they go back home to wash bits of charred flesh from their hands and to sit down to breakfast with their families, the authorities of the county profess they are unable to recognize a single member of the mob in that religious community of that most conservative state of the most stable democracy, dominated by law-making law-revering Anglo-Saxons.<sup>4</sup>

The Wytheville lynching helped spur Governor Harry Byrd to follow North Carolina's lead and secure passage of a stringent antilynching bill in 1928. These two states saw a decline in the number of lynchings, but extralegal violence against blacks continued to plague states in the Deep South. Freeman had initially opposed a federal antilynching law as unworkable. "It is well enough to talk about the 'strong arm' of the federal law," he wrote as Congress debated an antilynching bill in 1921-22. "Experience with the enforcement of prohibition has indicated that the arm has appeared strong because it has not had much to carry." When the House of Representatives passed the bill, he accused Republicans of pandering to the black vote. He conceded that passage of the bill might in fact help the GOP retain black votes, but he predicted that the price would be "another proof, like that of the Volstead Act, that the federal arm of the law can be stretched so far that it is

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<sup>4</sup>NL, Nov. 15, 1920, Aug. 4, 1921, Aug. 16, 1926, June 14, 1927.

dislocated." Southern senators killed the legislation with a filibuster, but a similar measure was introduced in 1934. By this time, Freeman's thinking had evolved to the point that he was no longer adamantly opposed to federal legislation against lynching. He had seen the beneficial effects of antilynching measures in North Carolina and Virginia, and he still preferred action at the state level. Yet when states failed to act, federal intervention against the scourge was the only alternative. Southerners in the Senate again filibustered against the legislation, but Freeman considered its eventual passage inevitable. When Senator Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina declared that a federal antilynching bill would be a "humiliation" to the South, he responded bitterly: "If there could be any worse humiliation than that of the lynchings themselves, it would be the humiliation of having grand juries fail to indict known lynchers, while law-makers, year after year, refused to pass an anti-lynching bill. . . . Perhaps it may be well to have the opponents of anti-lynching laws suffer a little of the humiliation that those who have fought against lynching have had so often to endure."<sup>5</sup>

Next in importance to protecting blacks from the

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<sup>5</sup>Younger and Moore (eds.), Governors of Virginia, 242; Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 173-74, 550-54; NL, Dec. 22, 1921, Jan. 27, 1922, Dec. 3, 1934, Aug. 12, Oct. 14, Nov. 17, 1937, Jan. 10, Jan. 13, Jan. 27, 1938, Jan. 9, 1940.

extralegal violence of the lynch mob came assuring them equal treatment within the established legal system. Here again Freeman sometimes worked behind the scenes as well as through his editorial columns to achieve his purposes. In 1926 the Judge of Richmond's Hustings Court, W. Kirk Mathews, sentenced Susie Boyd, a black woman who pleaded guilty to forging 22 checks totalling \$182, to 30 years in prison. Freeman denounced the sentence as excessive and expressed fear that it would work to the detriment of good race relations. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People became involved in the Boyd case, and Judge Mathews soon reduced the sentence to six years. Freeman applauded the reduced sentence but not the NAACP's involvement. "It was not necessary for any association interested in fair dealing to employ counsel for Susie," he maintained. "Responsible colored leaders were given assurance, as soon as Susie was convicted, that her sentence would not be permitted to stand, and that assurance would have been fulfilled even if the woman had had no lawyer." He assured the black people of Richmond that "they have friends among the white people of Richmond who will always help them in distress, if only the facts are made known." The case raised in Freeman's mind the question of whether Judge Mathews was "of the proper temperament to hold the office." Using his influence with the Richmond Bar Association, many of whose members were also members of

his Current Events Class, Freeman helped secure the nomination of a new Judge two years later. None of his editorial pronouncements mentioned that fair treatment of blacks was an issue, but he expressed his true feelings in a personal letter to the new Judge, John L. Ingram: "I felt . . . that the sentence of Susie Boyd . . . and other instances of discrimination against defenceless negroes were threatening all that we had tried to do for better racial relationship. From my very heart I thank God that in another year we shall have this great court on such a footing that there will be no discrimination against the poor or against the black."<sup>4</sup>

Another case in 1933 showed Freeman's growing acceptance of the NAACP as a positive force in furthering improved conditions for blacks. The case involved George Crawford, a black man accused of murdering two white women in Leesburg, Virginia. Freeman became involved as a behind-the-scenes advisor to the NAACP's executive secretary, Walter White. "The case presents more than an obligation to do justice; it presents an opportunity to advertise that fact to those who in some instances have had only too good reason to doubt the fairness of Southern Juries," Freeman wrote in the News Leader as the trial

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<sup>4</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 325-28; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, June 14, 1926, DSFP-LC, Box 176; NL, July 7, 1926, Jan. 14, Jan. 17, Jan. 18, 1928; DSF to John L. Ingram, Jan. 19, 1928, DSFP-LC, Box 11.

opened. "Every Virginian must be determined that when the case is ended, nobody, North or South, white or Negro, shall say that Crawford has not had absolute justice." In short, this must not be "another Scottsboro case" but rather "a model of what a criminal hearing should be, regardless of the race of the accused person." Crawford's chief counsel, Charles H. Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School, originally sought to quash the indictment on the ground that the grand jury that returned the indictment had no black members. The motion to quash was denied, but Freeman believed that Crawford's attorneys might have grounds for an appeal based on violation of the 14th Amendment. The United States Supreme Court would ultimately have to decide the issue, but even if it were left in doubt, "prudent courts will follow the example already set in Richmond, and name Negro grand Jurymen." After having consistently maintained his innocence, Crawford stunned his lawyers by admitting his guilt to them. Dr. Houston then focused his efforts on winning a life sentence rather than the death penalty, a strategy that proved successful. As the trial neared its end, Walter White penned Freeman a note from the courtroom thanking him for his assistance in assuring "an absolutely fair trial." Two days later he wrote a more formal letter in which he expressed "our most profound thanks for the invaluable aid which you gave in a case which marks a milestone in the progress of us all."

Several months after the trial, Freeman wrote a long letter to the editor of The Nation in defense of Houston, who had been criticized in some quarters for abandoning an appeal on the constitutional issue of jury discrimination and for permitting Crawford to enter a plea of guilty on the second murder charge. Freeman praised Houston for his skillful handling of the case and defended him against every charge of currying favor with Southern whites. Since the trial blacks had been summoned for both grand and petty jury service in the Richmond and Suffolk Judicial circuits, and Freeman considered it "only a question of time before the Negroes will be restored to jury service everywhere in Virginia." He did not believe this would have been possible without Houston's effort to quash the indictment against Crawford on the grounds of jury discrimination. He thus regarded the Crawford case as "epochal." Moreover, he felt that "the courageous and tactful appearance of the N.A.A.C.P. in this case went a long way toward changing the whole attitude of Virginia toward that organization." He confessed that in the past he had felt that "the N.A.A.C.P. was not advocating a policy that promised the greatest advancement to the Negroes with the least hardship and friction." Yet after meeting Walter White and Charles Houston and following their handling of the case, "I found my prejudice against that organization evaporated." In short, the actions of White and Houston in the Crawford case



convinced Freeman that the NAACP shared his commitment to gradual equality for blacks within the South's segregated system. So long as the Association's leaders did not press for immediate equality in all areas of life or call for a complete abandonment of segregation, Freeman had no quarrel with the organization and even welcomed its legal pressure as a justification for urging gradual, voluntary change upon Southern whites.<sup>7</sup>

Freeman also became a cautious advocate of gradually increased political rights for blacks. Here again his views underwent a slow evolution. In the early years of his editorship, he gave no indication that he regarded black disfranchisement as anything other than a great boon to Southerners, both white and black. "It is not to be expected that a race that enjoyed the ballot for a generation should acquiesce in the franchise legislation Southern states have been compelled to adopt," he wrote in 1917. "The pity of it is that the negroes were ever given the vote before they were prepared to cast it intelligently." The restriction of black suffrage had "inspired ambition to learn, acquire property and lead cleaner lives in thousands of the race that otherwise would have been content to remain in ignorance and poverty, and

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<sup>7</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 328-40; NL, Nov. 1, Nov. 6, 1933; Walter White to DSF, Dec. 16, Dec. 18, 1933, DSFP-LC, Box 20; DSF to Freda Kirchwey, June 12, 1934, DSFP-LC, Box 24.

steeped in immorality" and had "emancipated the negro from influences that constituted a constant source of friction between the races and stayed the helping white hand now so freely extended in many situations affecting the welfare of the negro." When women received the vote in 1920, Freeman urged all white women to register in order to offset a movement to register large numbers of black women. "On the control of the elections by safe majorities in all districts, white government in the South depends," he asserted. "No chances can be taken!" As his disgust with Virginia's Democratic machine deepened in the early 1920s, Freeman began to see an expanded electorate as a desirable corrective. But though he hinted at the possibility of admitting greater numbers of blacks to the ballot, he generally avoided the race issue in his discussions of the need for a widened franchise. The progressive reforms achieved under the governorship of Harry F. Byrd cooled his opposition to the machine and his calls for electoral reform.<sup>2</sup>

Only after blacks themselves began to exert legal pressure for increased political participation in the 1930s did Freeman lend his editorial approval to black suffrage. In 1933, with blacks turning in increasing numbers to the Democratic party, black leaders went to court to open the

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<sup>2</sup>NL, June 28, 1915, April 10, 1917, Sept. 18, 1920, Oct. 27, 1921, Nov. 6, Nov. 7, Nov. 8, Nov. 17, Nov. 19, Nov. 24, 1924; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 289-98.

party primaries to their people. Freeman used the occasion to urge white Virginians "to accept the inevitable and to throw open the primary to those Negroes who are Democrats." The only alternative was "to repeal the primary law and to place the control of the balloting entirely in the hands of the party," with a consequent increase in the possibility of fraud. Freeman's main concern had always been to preserve honest, intelligent government, and he had supported the disfranchisement of blacks as a means to that end. By 1933 he no longer saw the enfranchisement of qualified blacks as a threat to good government. "Their votes are not to be bought and sold en masse today," he argued. "That has been demonstrated in every recent primary in which they have participated." Moreover, Freeman's sense of fair play now demanded that blacks be given a greater voice within the Democratic party. "Faced as they are with the virtual certainty that Virginia will remain under Democratic rule for many years, Negroes who are excluded from the primary are, in effect, disfranchised," he maintained. "They can have no influence on the party in power, and can expect nothing at its hands."<sup>9</sup>

Freeman remained consistent in his opposition to enfranchising the ignorant; but he came increasingly to view the issue as one of class rather than race. His fear of an electorate that he perceived to be motivated more and more

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<sup>9</sup>NL, Nov. 13, 1933.

by selfish economic interests caused him to oppose efforts to abolish the poll tax. Ironically, in seeking to separate the poll tax question from the race question, Freeman made an argument similar to that of Southern liberals who opposed the tax, but his growing disenchantment with the "class" legislation of the New Deal led him down a different path. "Today the interest that nine men in ten display in government is economic and selfish," he wrote in 1936. "They want to see how they can use government to their advantage, or how they can get something from government." Under such conditions the poll tax served as a barrier, albeit an imperfect one, to the ever-widening control of government by voters who desired only their own economic gain and politicians who sought to exploit those desires. "Call it treason to liberalism or denounce it as fascism if you will," the News Leader contended, "but we say in all candor that we do not believe anyone should be privileged to vote who is not capable of exercising some measure of moral self-restraint when he is tempted to give his vote to plundering his government for his own profit. Neither do we think he should have the franchise if he is incapable of seeing, at least once in a while, that some of the things self-seeking ignorant politicians propose are things that cannot be done." Payment of a poll tax, Freeman conceded, was no guarantee of intelligence, but he advocated continuation of the poll tax requirement until a suitable

intelligence test could be substituted. He continued to sound this theme for several years. "Problems of government, as they become increasingly economic, are sufficiently complicated already by ignorance and class-interest: How is their solution to be expedited by adding to the electorate more ignorance or more class interest?" he asked in 1938. Four years later he declared that "the poll tax is not a sacred talisman of 'white supremacy' and of the exclusion of the Negro from the franchise" but rather "a practical, though an awkward and unsatisfactory, substitute for an intelligence qualification which will place the ballot in the hands of all those, but only of those, regardless of race, who can use the ballot with some sense."<sup>10</sup>

Not until 1943, when passage of a federal anti-poll tax bill seemed inevitable and Freeman's disgust with Virginia's "invisible government" had again risen, did he finally concede on the poll tax issue. "As the issue is protracted, Congress after Congress, those of us who have accepted the poll tax as a substitute for a more desirable intelligence test gradually are losing interest in the maintenance of tax requirement," he admitted. "In some States and in many localities, the poll tax serves more to perpetuate machine rule than to assure the choice of officers by the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., July 29, Aug. 11, 1936, Jan. 3, Jan. 14, Feb. 17, 1938, July 31, 1939, Oct. 14, Nov. 24, 1942; DSF to J. D. Eggleston, June 9, 1942, DSFP-LC, Box 42.

intelligent element." He predicted that the abolition of the poll tax would make the independent vote a larger factor in elections and would thus have the beneficial effect of forcing candidates to state clearly their stand on vital public issues. "A larger electorate is more difficult to control and is more likely to reach its decisions on the basis of issues rather than of cliques," he wrote. He never retreated from his insistence upon an intelligent electorate, but he expressed approval when increasing numbers of blacks met the requirements for voting. "No sensible person has any other feeling than that of satisfaction that the Negroes have reached the point educationally where they can and will qualify for the ballot and will use it as other voters do," he wrote in 1945. "It is the old, hard, slow lesson of political evolution -- a lesson so often disdained by impatience and so often driven home by experience and by the outworking of time."<sup>11</sup>

Freeman's own evolution on the race issue was often slow but sure where political rights, equal justice, better education and improved living conditions were concerned. Yet his views on segregation proved much more resistant to change. The issue of racial separation is one where it is especially difficult to draw a clear distinction between his personal beliefs and his notion of what whites would accept.

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<sup>11</sup>NL, May 25, 1943, Aug. 31, 1944, March 17, May 18, 1945; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 302-4.

Yet his few private letters and statements on the subject indicate that he never personally accepted the notion of a racially integrated society. He was most insistent on the need to prevent racial intermarriage and interbreeding. "There is no lot more tragic than that of the hybrid," he wrote in 1924. "The whole span of his days is one of distress and humiliation to himself and of danger to society." Later that year he cited the findings of a researcher who had studied a group of people of mixed blood in the Virginia foothills as proof of the wisdom of anti-miscegenation laws and also quoted with approval a line from Eugene O'Neill's "All God's Chillun Got Wings": "Dere's one road where de white goes on alone; dere's another road where de black goes on alone." In an editorial written in 1926, he stated simply: "Prohibition of the intermarriage of whites and colored people is, of course, a necessity." His private views on the matter differed little from his editorial pronouncements, although he did tell his Current Events Class in 1924 that he "refused to get excited over racial integrity and positively declined . . . to don his night shirt and ride a white horse for its maintenance."<sup>12</sup>

Given these views it is not surprising that Freeman was more inflexible on segregation than on any other racial issue. He did acknowledge that segregation had not always

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 307-9; NL, Feb. 18, Nov. 24, Nov. 28, 1924, Feb. 8, 1926; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Nov. 24, 1924, DSFP-LC, Box 177.

been so rigid in Virginia but argued that in some cases blacks had segregated themselves by choice. "Twenty years ago most churches still had a number of regular and reverent colored attendants," he wrote in 1919. "Gradually, as a result of the negroes' own free choice, they ceased to come to the white churches, until now few churches, if any, reserve seats for negroes." He thus could not understand why some blacks were now protesting their exclusion from evangelist Billy Sunday's Richmond crusade. A few years later he reaffirmed his belief in the need to maintain segregation at public gatherings. Amid reports of "racial mixing" and "the teaching of racial equality" at Hampton Institute, Freeman warned the Virginia school's leaders that they "must avoid every semblance of the practice of racial equality" if they were to "preserve the sympathy and loyalty of Southern whites." Yet when the Hampton controversy spurred efforts to legalize segregation in all public places, Freeman issued warnings to his fellow white citizens: "Many negroes who willingly obey the usage of theatres and public places do not want that usage made into law. That is understandable." He urged white legislators "to give Hampton another chance . . . and so make the passage of the laws unnecessary, it being far better to have the negro conform to a custom than to compel obedience to a law." His consistent opposition to extending segregation by law demonstrated Freeman's sensitivity to the



feelings of black citizens and perhaps indicated that he contemplated some eventual softening of racial barriers. Yet he never gave a clear sign that he had moved very far from the view expressed privately in 1922 that anyone who advocated a complete abandonment of segregation was "crazy."<sup>13</sup>

Freeman expressed sympathy for the plight of the black worker in a segregated society. "The Negro must choose, under present conditions, between manual labor and a profession," he wrote in 1930. "There is no middle ground for him." He pointed out that the professions were overcrowded, that only a few blacks could hold their own in the trades and that the few clerical jobs open to blacks were low-paying. The vast majority of black workers were thus relegated to common labor or menial jobs in service to whites. "How can we deny the Negro economic opportunity and yet expect good citizenship of him?" Freeman asked his readers. "Can we oppress him vocationally and demand that he progress morally?" Yet he offered no real solution to the problem beyond expanding vocational training in black high schools. He also lamented the fact that blacks were paid less than white workers for performing similar jobs in industry and hoped that the CIO would work to undo this

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<sup>13</sup>NL, Jan. 30, 1919, July 15, 1925, Feb. 8, 1926; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, Feb. 8, 1926, DSFP-LC, Box 176; "Minutes," News Leader Current Events Class, June 12, 1922, DSFP-LC, Box 177.

unjustice by admitting black workers to its unions in the South. "Some of us deplore the methods that are being employed in CIO strikes," he wrote in 1937, "but we should welcome a change that cancels the old, unjust industrial doctrine that the wages of a Negro are to be low simply because he is a Negro." But when attempts at organizing black workers during World War II met with resistance in many unions, Freeman again had no solution except to counsel patience. "Time must do its work in solving this, and time will," he maintained. He believed that the idea of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee was "morally sound" but "unworkable in the South." When a Southern filibuster killed the attempt to create a permanent FEPC in 1946, Freeman saw the bill's defeat as both a victory and a challenge for Southern whites:

A majority of those Southerners who have devoted themselves to improving vocational opportunities for the Negro are convinced that FEPC represents the wrong method. If the bill were passed it would increase difficulties of many tested friends of the Negro. Once again it must be said: The South can never be clubbed into giving the Negro a fair chance industrially; but the South increasingly is doing so on its own account, and will progress steadily -- if left alone. Defeat of the bill should stir the South to new effort to give the Negro worker a better chance of advancement through honest effort.<sup>14</sup>

If Freeman held out some hope, however faint, of an

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<sup>14</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 342-44; NL, Jan. 7, 1930, Jan. 6, July 6, 1937, Aug. 3, Aug. 4, Aug. 10, 1944, Jan. 23, 1946; DSF to W. K. Morton, Jan. 26, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 71.

integrated work force, he remained adamant in his opposition to integrated schools. He first set forth his views on the subject in 1938, when the Supreme Court upheld the right of a black student, Lloyd L. Gaines, to attend the University of Missouri Law School. Freeman protested the Court's decision as an attempt to change human nature through force of law and predicted that it would prove to be as futile as the Reconstruction amendments had been:

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, written in passion, have set forth many ideals that could not be realized because they ran afoul of deeply engrafted custom. Human nature can be changed, but only by natural, voluntary adjustment. Let it not be said again, to paraphrase Jeremiah, that the children's teeth in this day and age are set on edge by the sour grapes eaten by their grandfathers.

He counselled that "time and tolerance, not written law, must correct inequalities like those at which the action was aimed." Yet Freeman did use the Court's decision to strengthen his call for more truly equal educational facilities for black students. "Inferentially, the decision requires that equal facilities in the secondary schools justify their name," he maintained. "They do not do so now except in a few progressive Southern cities." He noted that black schools in the rural South "mock the doctrine that equipment and instruction must be as good as in the white schools" and demanded that this situation be changed. More than two years before the Gaines decision Freeman had warned

his fellow Richmonders that failure to "provide equal facilities within the just meaning of the words" might well compel blacks to bring suit in court to demand admission to white schools. When a similar issue arose in rural Sussex County in 1942, he again acknowledged that "'equal' school facilities have been a legal fiction in most rural districts of the South" and repeated his warning that failure to provide genuinely equal educational facilities for blacks would lead to integrated public schools.<sup>15</sup>

After World War II, the civil rights movement increasingly focused on bringing an end to segregation. As it did so, the movement eventually outpaced Freeman's slowly evolving views on the race issue. Freeman was simply not prepared for an abandonment of "separate-but-equal," especially in the schools. In 1947 he joined three other members of the President's Commission on Higher Education in dissenting from that part of the Commission's report that condemned the practice of segregation in institutions of higher learning. The dissenters issued no detailed report because, as Freeman explained, it would be useless to attempt to answer the type of argument put forth by the other members of the Commission who "are sharing in the new abolitionist movement that began at the White House almost precisely a century after William Lloyd Garrison started his

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<sup>15</sup>NL, June 25, 1936, Dec. 13, Dec. 14, 1938, Sept. 15, 1942, Feb. 16, 1944.

emancipation movement." In a letter to the executive secretary of the Commission, Freeman denied that his dissent resulted from anti-Negro prejudice. "My concern is that I do not want to lose my opportunity of enlarging the opportunities of others by taking a position that will not be sustained by Southern opinion," he asserted. Freeman was undoubtedly sincere in this explanation, but his action was widely hailed by anti-Negro fanatics. Freeman was surprised by the number of letters he received from white racists. "I did not know they were so numerous or so vigorous," he told a correspondent. He wanted nothing to do with these Negro-haters, but he showed no signs of relenting in his opposition to school desegregation. "I have no sympathy whatsoever with any proposal for the abandonment of segregation in our schools," he reassured a correspondent late in 1948. "I think, on the contrary, that certainly in all the grades below those of post-graduate study we must maintain a dual school system in the South and must be prepared to pay for it."<sup>14</sup>

The desire to maintain racial integrity remained the key to Freeman's views on segregation. Probably his fullest private expression of these views came in a letter to a Northern friend in 1944:

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<sup>14</sup>DSF to Richard D. Anderson, Dec. 29, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 75; DSF to Francis J. Brown, Sept. 26, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 82; DSF to Guy E. Snavely, Dec. 27, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 83; DSF to G. B. Palmer, Nov. 16, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 92.

The longer, closer contact of the intelligent Southerner with the Negroes has led him to say, in effect, "You must have justice and we shall help you get it; we have a common economic stake in this land of sunshine; we must work together to conquer the soil, to develop the mines, and to harness the waterfall; we whites must see to it that you get your part of the profits in generous proportion to the contribution you make; ours is the duty also of seeing that you are not humiliated; but biologically and therefore socially we are different; we are not going to amalgamate; because that is so, you simply are made miserable when you are brought so close to the whites that passion or ambition fires you to seek the unattainable -- a white wife; for this reason, we believe you should stay apart, build your own society, improve it, strengthen your family life, combat innate promiscuity, and build up race pride; we do not believe it fair to pretend to equality we have no intention of recognizing in what we find, after all, is the supreme desire of many a Negro heart -- amalgamation."

Freeman maintained that the Northern view of race relations differed from the Southern "only in the point at which it draws the line." He attributed the difference "primarily to the lack of widespread contacts between Northern whites and Negroes." Yet recognizing the difference between Northern and Southern views on segregation and understanding its cause did not mean that Freeman excused what he regarded as Northern meddling in Southern race relations. Southerners, he told his Northern friend, sometimes "wonder why intelligent Northerners who never think of mating the robin and the starling agitate needlessly the relations of

Negroes and whites."<sup>17</sup>

During the last decade of his life, Freeman came to see the agitation of Northern "neo-abolitionists" and militant blacks on the one hand and anti-black fanatics on the other as the greatest threat to improved race relations in the South. Several times during his last year as editor of the News Leader, at a time when civil rights had become an issue in national politics, Freeman urged both blacks and whites to demonstrate some flexibility and understanding of each other's feelings. "Regardless of the outcome of the election, some of the fires of resentment will burn on and on in the South and will do us far more harm than any President is capable of doing," he told his fellow whites. "We shall be infinitely better off if we act on our own initiative, play fair and go as far as we decently can in self-respect to meet the reasonable aspirations of Negroes." Specifically, he again urged whites to guarantee blacks equal treatment in the courts, equal pay for equal work, increased job opportunities in the public service, equal facilities in education and transportation and an end to lynching. Blacks, for their part, should "reconcile themselves to the fact that segregation is not going to be abandoned in schools or in transportation, and that the line is to be drawn as strictly as ever between civil rights

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<sup>17</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 312-13; NL, Feb. 8, 1926; DSF to Agnes Meyer, May 10, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 57.

and social privilege." Freeman admitted that to many blacks "this will seem a stern and discouraging situation," but he assured them that they had "far more to gain by conforming than by rebelling, by trusting evolution rather than revolution, by deserving rather than by demanding more." Relations between the races, Freeman maintained, "will be far more amicable if they are established by Southern whites and Southern Negroes than if they are defined by Federal statute and enforced by federal courts."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman always based his hopes for better race relations in the South on his faith in "the processes of time" and "the triumph of fair play in the human heart." In its emphasis on "evolution rather than revolution," his faith was probably naive. His own resistance to ending "separate-but-equal" was a sign that Southern liberal thought on the race question was not advanced enough to keep pace with rising black expectations. Yet if his statements on race relations seemed conservative to a new, more militant, generation of blacks and white liberals, at least one prominent black leader of Freeman's own generation lamented that his voice was silenced before the civil rights crisis of the late 1950s and 1960s. In a letter written to Inez Freeman in 1965, Gordon Blaine Hancock, long-time professor at Virginia Union University and pastor of

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<sup>10</sup>DSF to Mrs. D. M. Welch, Oct. 27, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 94; NL, Feb. 25, April 13, Oct. 27, 1948.



Richmond's Moore Street Baptist Church, recalled an occasion on which Dr. Freeman had preached at Moore Street and had received "a book of testimonials from his Negro friends, who appreciated what he was doing for the cause of better race relations." Richmond blacks, Hancock remembered, felt that in Freeman "they had a friend at court." Hancock contrasted these recollections with the current conservative posture of the white press in Richmond and concluded: "In this critical hour we need so much the poise and point and power of a Douglas S Freeman." The fact that Hancock himself was now regarded almost as an "Uncle Tom" by younger activists illustrates the extent to which events had overtaken those who placed their faith in evolutionary rather than revolutionary change and the different perspective from which a more militant generation viewed the question of race.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., Feb. 25, 1948; Gordon B. Hancock to Inez G. Freeman, Oct. 26, 1965, DSFP-LC, Box 241; Raymond Gavins, The Perils and Prospects of Southern Black Leadership: Gordon Blaine Hancock, 1884-1970 (Durham, 1977), viii-ix, 180-90.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HEROES

In his glowing review of R. E. Lee, Stephen Vincent Benet had suggested that Douglas Freeman be chained to a desk and compelled to write a biography of George Washington. Freeman had warmed to the idea of writing a life of Washington and had begun collecting material for it. Yet his continuing love for the Army of Northern Virginia and his desire to make a contribution to the training of a new generation of American soldiers had soon led him away from the Washington project and into the composition of Lee's Lieutenants. Immediately upon completion of the Lieutenants, he began work on a short, one-volume life of Lee designed primarily for students of high school age. Throughout June and July, 1944, he worked on the first chapter of the volume but was not satisfied with it. On July 28 he resumed the 14-hour per week writing schedule that had speeded his progress on the Lieutenants. Writing without footnotes for the first time in his career as a historian, he amazed himself at the speed with which he turned out pages on the "Little Lee." At 5:03 p.m. on Saturday, September 23, 1944, he completed the first draft. The manuscript of 73,300 words had consumed 126 hours. Freeman feared that it would require many more hours of revision. When he completed his revision on November 5, he

had spent 234 hours on the book, which he entitled "Robert E. Lee and American Youth." On November 10 he sent the manuscript to Scribner's, but he was far from satisfied with it. "You will understand, of course, that this is a tentative manuscript," he told C. F. Board, his editor on the project. "I am by no means satisfied that I have the pitch." He was afraid that the work might be too detailed in some respects and over-simplified in others. Mr. Board suggested revisions, but by now Freeman was already involved in other projects. In early 1946 he enlisted the help of his brother Allen in revising the "Little Lee" and promised to share any royalties on a 50-50 basis. Allen worked on the manuscript for several months but showed a tendency toward "mind-reading" that his brother abhorred. Interestingly, Allen Freeman did not find Lee to be the simple soul that Douglas had portrayed. "I am inclined to differ from your view that his was a simple character," Allen wrote. "It seemed so from the outside because he made himself conform always and completely to the ideal he had set for himself. What went on underneath may have been quite different." For Douglas, General Lee's simplicity was the key to his whole character, so his response to Allen's speculations was not surprising. "Of course I will have to ask you to eliminate those passages in which you try to fathom General Lee's mind," he told Allen matter-of-factly. "I don't think I ever could get consent of my historical

conscience to discuss what was going on inside a man's mind."<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, the "Little Lee" was lost in the shuffle of other work and lay unpublished until five years after Freeman's death, when Scribner's issued it under the title Lee of Virginia. The hero of the book was clearly Douglas Freeman's Lee, simple and spiritual in character. The qualities that Freeman most admired in Lee -- fortitude, self-control and self-denial -- were precisely those that he considered most important for American young people in a troubled world. Yet Freeman was careful not to be overly didactic. Lee of Virginia included numerous anecdotes and colorful passages that painted a vivid portrait of the South's great hero.<sup>2</sup>

On the evening of October 16, 1944, while Freeman was working on his first revision of the "Little Lee," he received word of the death of one of his great contemporary heroes, John Stewart Bryan. "To me this is a loss irreparable," he confided in his diary. "Forty years I knew him; thirty-six years I worked with him." Mindful of Freeman's long and intimate association with their father, Bryan's children commissioned him to write a biography.

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of DSF, May 31-Nov. 8, 1944, DSFP-LC; DSF to C. F. Board, Nov. 10, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 53; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Feb. 4, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 68; Allen W. Freeman to DSF, April 20, 1947 and DSF to Allen W. Freeman, April 21, 1947, both in DSFP-LC, Box 78.

<sup>2</sup>DSF, Lee of Virginia (New York, 1958).

Although the life of Bryan was to be intimate and for private circulation only, Freeman attacked the project with characteristic thoroughness. He began work on the Bryan biography on November 5, 1944 and devoted most of his writing time to it for the remainder of the year. In 1945 he began to devote more time to the Washington, but he still managed 269 hours on "JSB." On September 21, 1946, he finished the text and completed his revisions by late December.<sup>2</sup>

"John Stewart Bryan" was a labor of love, but on the same day that he concluded work on it, he completed the first draft of a much more important work -- the first volume of his biography of George Washington. He had finally decided to undertake the massive project largely at the urging of Raymond B. Fosdick, his colleague on the board of the Rockefeller Foundation. With Fosdick's help, he secured an initial grant of \$12,000 from the Carnegie Corporation to help with the expenses involved in researching the life of Washington. He was determined that the Washington would be as thoroughly researched as his works on the Confederacy, but he knew that his other obligations would make it impossible for him to conduct archival research in person. With the Carnegie grant, which was administered through the Johns Hopkins University,

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<sup>2</sup>Diary of DSF, Oct. 16, Nov. 5, 1944, Dec. 31, 1945, Sept. 21, Dec. 30, 1946, DSFP-LC.

Freeman was able to procure the services of a full-time research assistant, Dr. Gertrude R. B. Richards. On October 12, 1944, Dr. Richards, a former Wellesley College history instructor of Freeman's age, began collecting material on Washington. Freeman himself put in his first full day of work on the project on November 26 and began outlining the first chapter of the Washington on January 7, 1945.<sup>4</sup>

As he delved into the life of Washington and the history of 18th-century Virginia, Freeman encountered several surprises. Most astonishing to the ever-thorough Freeman was the extent to which previous biographers had overlooked important sources. Though appalled at the negligence of his predecessors, he realized that the discovery of so much new material presented him with an even greater opportunity than he had imagined. He told his brother Allen that the earlier biographers of Washington "followed the line of least resistance" in their research. "It was a dis-service to scholarship but a great blessing to me because it gave me opportunity I would not otherwise have enjoyed," he wrote. Freeman was also surprised at the man he uncovered. He found the young Washington to be a complex personality who was still not really known by 20th-century Americans. "I certainly believe I can [say] that he is the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 23, Oct. 12, Nov. 26, 1944, Jan. 7, 1945; DSF to Raymond B. Fosdick, May 10, June 30, 1944, DSFP-LC, Box 55; Time, Oct. 18, 1948, p. 110.

most misunderstood great man in American history," he told his brother. "And tough! You scarcely would believe him capable of some of the heartless, selfish actions that have to be written down about him." Indeed, the young Washington who emerged in his manuscript was so different from the traditional portrait that Freeman feared some would accuse him of debunking.<sup>5</sup>

Thanks to Dr. Richards' efficiency and his own rigorous work schedule, Freeman was able to complete the first two volumes of George Washington in time for publication in the fall of 1948. Subtitled Young Washington, these volumes totalled over 1,000 pages and carried the subject through his 27th year. The first volume contained extensive information on Virginia in the 18th century and the background of Washington's family. As such, it provided an important reference source for colonial Virginia, but it did not always provide stimulating reading for the general public. Freeman anticipated some criticism on this account but maintained that "I had to get the background material written if I was to understand the man and his times." The second volume was more typical of the Freeman readers had come to admire. Covering the period of Washington's service in the French and Indian War, it contained several passages of brilliant military narrative and concluded with an

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<sup>5</sup>DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Feb. 3, June 30, July 8, July 29, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 78; Wallace Meyer to DSF, Dec. 4, 1947, DSFP-LC, Box 81.

evaluation of "The Man and His Training at Twenty-seven." For Freeman, the basic element in Washington's training as a soldier was patience. The basic element in Washington's code of conduct was justice, "Justice exact and inclusive, Justice that never for an instant overlooked his own interests." And Washington was a young man mightily concerned with his own interests. The word that epitomized young Washington was ambition. "Ambition was Washington through 1758; Washington was a synonym for ambition," Freeman wrote. Yet Washington's ambition, though powerful, was never rash. Rather, it was "the quenchless ambition of an ordered mind." Washington performed every task as if it were a land survey -- "step by step, with the closest possible approach to absolute precision." Whatever Washington undertook to do, "he did thoroughly and methodically," and he learned "so to respect the particular work he was doing, and so to devote himself to it, that he could concentrate on it in spite of distractions."<sup>4</sup>

With the appearance of Young Washington, Freeman reached the peak of fulfillment of his own ambition for worldwide recognition as a scholar. Time magazine featured him on the cover of its issue for October 18, 1948. The cover story, entitled "The Virginians," reviewed Freeman's conclusions about young Washington and provided a portrait

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<sup>4</sup>Diary of DSF, Oct. 8, Oct. 17, 1948, DSFP-LC; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Aug. 3, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 88; DSF, George Washington, II, 368-99.



of Freeman himself, replete with quotations of colloquial expressions long familiar to a generation of Virginia radio listeners. ("One of the great things about life is to keep movin' and not hurry, and that's largely a matter of schedulin' your day.") Scholarly reviewers of Young Washington found much to praise, but the reception for the Washington was not as warm as that for R. E. Lee and Lee's Lieutenants. Much of the negative criticism centered around Freeman's lack of familiarity with the 18th century. Bernhard Knollenberg, writing in the William and Mary Quarterly, was especially critical of Freeman's "apparent weakness in general colonial history." Stanley Pargellis' critique in the American Historical Review was generally much more favorable than Knollenberg's, but Pargellis, too, observed that "[a]ll through these pages is suggested Freeman's unfamiliarity with the intangibles of the eighteenth century world." Other reviewers questioned Freeman's sense of proportion. "It is difficult to draw the line between the historical and the antiquarian, although in a biography where personal details are important one must give the author the benefit of the doubt," wrote the English commentator Frank Thistlethwaite. "Nevertheless one cannot help feeling that here and there the pages are over-loaded with detail." Harvard historian Perry Miller praised the last chapter of Young Washington as "an impressive summing up of a man's qualities" but felt that

It, like the long chapter on Virginia society, was "an array of particulars, not a definition." In a personal note, Freeman's friend and colleague Allan Nevins said that if he were to criticize the social chapters "and perhaps one or two other sections, it would not be on the ground of too much detail, but rather on the ground that they were too schematic; the bones of the outline showed a little too plainly in the text."<sup>7</sup>

Yet Freeman credited his extensive outlining with speeding composition, and he continued the practice as he pressed ahead on Volume III. He also added the services of Mrs. Mary Wells Knight Ashworth as "historical associate." Mrs. Ashworth was a longtime friend who had begun assisting Freeman in 1945. Thanks to the able assistance of Mrs. Ashworth and Dr. Richards and his own highly refined system, Freeman was nearly finished with Volume III by the time of his retirement from the News Leader at the end of June, 1949. In the first week after his "change-over," he spent 65 hours on historical work. According to his carefully kept calculations, this figure exceeded his previous weekly record by more than 21 hours. "Life is so beautiful now I'm afraid it is a dream, from which I shall be awakened by a voice that says, 'Get up and go down town

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<sup>7</sup>Time, October 18, 1948, pp. 108-18; William and Mary Quarterly (Jan., 1949), 111-21; American Historical Review (April, 1949), 615-16; The Spectator, May 13, 1949, p. 654; New England Quarterly (June, 1949), 253-57; Allan Nevins to DSF, Nov. 1, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 91.

and write two columns of editorial," he mused in his diary. Newspaper work never again interfered, and, though there remained other occasional distractions, Freeman was able to complete the third and fourth volumes in time for publication in the fall of 1951. Volume III, subtitled "Planter and Patriot," covered Washington's life from the time of his marriage to Martha Dandridge Custis in January, 1759 through December, 1775, when he watched his ragtag Continental Army melting away outside Boston. Volume IV, subtitled "Leader of the Revolution," began with the winter of despair and ended with Washington receiving word in April, 1778 that France had recognized American Independence.<sup>a</sup>

As he worked on these volumes, Freeman encountered a number of surprises. The first was that Washington grew in character after his marriage to a rich widow made him a wealthy man. The tenets of Freeman's faith did not encompass growth through prosperity, but in a private letter he acknowledged that such had been the case with Washington: "Apparently, he was one of the few men who grew in stature through prosperity -- most men find their greatest growth in the school of adversity." A second surprise was the leadership ability Washington displayed immediately upon taking command of the Continental Army in the summer of

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<sup>a</sup>DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Oct. 9, 1950, DSFP-LC, Box 101; Diary of DSF, July 8, July 9, 1949, DSFP-LC.

1775. Washington's accomplishment as commander-in-chief, Freeman believed, could not be explained by documentary evidence. Rather, the explanation was one of spirit, a spirit developed through years of attention to the endless details of plantation management and to community service. "It seems a strange statement to make," Freeman wrote, "but Washington schooled himself for dealing with Horatio Gates and Charles Lee and Benedict Arnold through the things he had done patiently and not always willingly for a most unusual combination of neighborhood deadbeats and rascals." Thus, the administrative skills and qualities of character acquired during his years as a planter proved more valuable to Washington the general than did his military experience during the French and Indian War. The third surprise Freeman encountered was the extent to which the story of Washington as leader of the Revolution became less one of battles than of administration. Skill in administration was one of the qualities Freeman most admired in Lee, and he found these skills even more prominent in explaining Washington's greatness. Washington, concluded Freeman, "was one-tenth field commander and nine-tenths administrator" whose "prime duty was not to kill the British but to keep the American Army alive." This discovery mandated a shift in emphasis from what Freeman had anticipated. As he explained in a progress report to the Carnegie Corporation:

Instead of watching step by step the  
development of Washington's strategy, which

remained essentially and simply that of avoiding a general engagement with a superior force, I have had to describe how he sought vainly to get shoes for his men, how he tried to prod negligent commissaries and somnolent quartermasters, how he had to rid the Army of incompetent officers and to repeat year by year the disheartening task of rebuilding an army that disbanded in December. I have had to deal with the problems of desertion and, above all, with the perplexities of human relationships that involved more arrogance and self-assertiveness on the part of subordinates than was shown in any of the other wars I have studied or witnessed.

Washington's immense patience and skill in handling these administrative tasks "undoubtedly saved the American cause" and marked him as a man of greatness even though his battles were of relatively little importance.<sup>2</sup>

As with the first two volumes, reviewers heaped praise on Freeman's accomplishment in Volumes III and IV but expressed certain reservations. One review aroused Freeman's ire. Carl Bridenbaugh's assessment in the New York Times Book Review was generally favorable, but he took Freeman to task for loading down the account of Washington's years at Mount Vernon with too much detail. Bridenbaugh pronounced this section "so tedious that even the student nods." He also criticized as irrelevant two long chapters on the Stamp Act and the Robinson scandal and added that

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<sup>2</sup>DSF to Mrs. E. K. Lord, Nov. 24, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 90; "How a Great Historian Studied a Great American: The Freeman Letters on George Washington," American Heritage (Feb., 1956), 67-68; DSF, George Washington, III, xiii, xxviii; DSF to Wallace Meyer, Sept. 30, Nov. 16, 1949, DSFP-LC, Box 98; DSF to Charles Scribner, Feb. 15, 1950, DSFP-LC, Box 102.

they, "like the chapter on Virginia in Washington's youth in a previous volume, reveal an unfortunate lack of familiarity with the general history of Virginia at this time. On the other hand, he felt that Freeman's resort to the "fog of war" technique deprived the reader of an understanding of the British side of the Revolutionary War and thus of a fuller understanding of the struggle and Washington's role in it. Finally, Bridenbaugh denied that Freeman's volumes, for all their merit, really brought out the inner man. "We have long known he was great," Bridenbaugh wrote of Washington, "now we know he was human; but we still do not know the man, as, for example, we know John Adams or Abraham Lincoln. Perhaps we never will." Freeman bristled at Bridenbaugh's criticisms. He believed that Bridenbaugh was "the one man, so far as I know, who has definite ill will toward me" and attributed this ill will to "my refusal to accept him as final authority on colonial history during the time he was at Williamsburg as head of the Institute of Early American History and Culture." He was especially upset that Bridenbaugh's review had appeared in the New York Times, not only because of that paper's influence but because his daughter Anne had recently married into the

Times "family" when she wed Julius Ochs Adler, Jr.<sup>10</sup>

Yet there was plenty of good news in the fall of 1951. Volume V, which would carry Washington through the Revolutionary War to his return to Mount Vernon in 1783, was well on the way to completion. Sales of the first four volumes were brisk, if not on a par with those of Lee and Lee's Lieutenants. Then, on October 25, Freeman received the unexpected but most welcome news that the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation had voted him a \$10,000 grant for each of the next three years. The \$30,000 from the Guggenheim Foundation would enable him to employ a full-time assistant to research papers in the Library of Congress pertaining to Washington's presidency. In December, 1951, Freeman contracted John Alexander Carroll, a young graduate student at Georgetown University, to conduct research at the Library of Congress for an annual salary of \$2,600. The exacting Freeman found Carroll's work to be highly satisfactory. "He is one of the best trained young historical students with whom I ever have worked," Freeman said, "and he turns in a large volume of material which is

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<sup>10</sup>New York Times Book Review, Oct. 14, 1951; DSF to Wallace Meyer, Oct. 13, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 107; DSF to Anne Freeman Adler, Nov. 29, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 104. Freeman elected not to send this letter to his daughter. Among its stronger statements: "No chance has ever been missed by Bridenbaugh to smear me -- or anyone else. He is the embodiment of jealousy in historical writing."

uniformly in prime condition."<sup>11</sup>

While Mr. Carroll devoted 40 hours a week to plowing through manuscripts at the Library of Congress, Dr. Freeman worked an even longer week as he put the finishing touches on Volume V. Major work on this volume was completed in the spring of 1952, revisions and corrections were finished in August, and the book was published in the fall. Freeman felt that this fifth volume, subtitled "Victory with the Help of France," was in some respects the most difficult book he had ever written "because it had to be condensed and had to cover a multiplicity of source materials, some of which did not come to hand until quite late." It was certainly the most fast-paced and dramatic volume of George Washington. Freeman was always at his best when writing dramatic narrative, and, although the only major combat operations covered in Volume V were the Monmouth and Yorktown campaigns, the volume contained a number of other dramatic episodes. Foremost among these were Washington's discovery of Benedict Arnold's treason and his farewell to the officers of the Continental Army at Fraunces Tavern in New York City.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of Volume V, Freeman assessed Washington as

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<sup>11</sup>Diary of DSF, Oct. 20, Oct. 25, 1951, DSFP-LC; DSF to Robert M. Lester, Oct. 26, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 105; DSF to John A. Carroll, Dec. 12, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 109; DSF to Joseph T. Durkin, Feb. 12, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 110.

<sup>12</sup>Diary of DSF, Aug. 12, 1952, DSFP-LC; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, April 29, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 111; DSF, George Washington, V, 196-202, 466-68.



a man and as a soldier at the close of the Revolution. He re-emphasized Washington's strength as an administrator, even though he admitted that with respect to supply, the Continental Army was certainly not well administered. Where Washington shone brightest as an administrator was in his dealings with commanders of other geographical departments and with members of Congress. In his evaluation of Washington as a commander, Freeman listed eight characteristics that accounted for Washington's success: patriotism, courage, prudent caution, sound judgment, patience, systematic diligence, a sense of flexible justice, and an unfailing regard for civil authority. Although he had found young Washington to be a complicated personality, Freeman concluded that the mature Washington was, like Lee, an essentially simple soul. "He was so simple, in fact, that he seems to meet the basic test of an integrated personality, which is that his response to a specified stimulus may be predicted with measurable accuracy," Freeman maintained. Unlike Lee, Washington demonstrated no personal religious faith. "He had believed that a God directed his path, but he had not been particularly ardent in his faith," wrote Freeman. His one-sentence characterization of Washington at the end of the Revolutionary War was admiring but not loving: "He was a patriot of conscious integrity and unassailable conduct who had given himself completely to the revolutionary cause and desired for himself the satisfaction

of having done his utmost and of having won the approval of those whose esteem he put above every other reward." Yet if Freeman never loved Washington as he loved Lee, he clearly considered him no less a hero. As he expressed his feelings to a friend: "[I]n Washington this nation and the western hemisphere have a man, 'greater than the world knew, living and dying,' a man dedicated, just and incorruptible, an example for long centuries of what character and diligence can achieve."<sup>12</sup>

And Douglas Freeman needed heroes, not only from the past but in the present, as well. Increasingly, in the years following World War II, the man in whom Freeman came to see the heroic qualities he most admired in Lee and Washington was another leader of men in arms -- General Dwight David Eisenhower. Freeman expressed some doubts about Eisenhower when the General first rose to prominence in the early months of the Second World War. "I am not so sure about Eisenhower, either," he told Allen Freeman in March, 1943. "He may be too much of a smoothie." Yet Eisenhower's performance as leader of the Allied forces in Western Europe in 1944 and 1945 erased all uncertainties in Freeman's mind. As his disappointment in President Truman's postwar leadership deepened, Freeman came to regard Eisenhower as the man best able to guide America's fortunes

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., xiii, 480-501; DSF to Raymond B. Fosdick, Jan. 5, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 105.

In a dangerous world. In November, 1946, he met with Eisenhower in Washington. The Virginian opened their conversation with a prayer and went on to describe how he believed that the Democratic party had become complacent after 14 years in power. He thought that the national government needed a shake-up and appealed to Eisenhower to let his name be put forward as the Democratic presidential candidate. Eisenhower later recalled that Freeman "was very earnest and he placed his accent on the word 'duty.'" In short, the biographer of Lee and of Washington believed that this 20th-century captain had a simple duty to the nation to make the race. Freeman stayed more than an hour and pressed his case by citing historical examples of the danger of political stagnation. Freeman's appeal compelled Eisenhower to begin seriously considering a career in politics, but the General still felt that his primary duty was to the Army and declined to run in 1948. Freeman expressed regret but understanding for Eisenhower's position. "I need not tell you I am sorry you did not let yourself be a candidate in this election, because you would have been elected and would have been, in the mercy of God, able to render immense service," he wrote, "but you did what you thought you should have done and you were, of course, right in standing

squarely to it."<sup>14</sup>

Yet Freeman's faith in Eisenhower never waned, and he continued to urge the reluctant warrior to answer the call of duty. "This is the greatest hour of your life, the most fateful hour in American history," he told Eisenhower in September, 1950. "I shall pray for you as surely as I shall work with you." By the autumn of 1951, Freeman was sounding desperate. He told one correspondent that Eisenhower was "the one man who can redeem the evil hour in America" and wrote confidentially to Senator Harry Byrd: "If we of the South do not prevent the reelection of Truman or the choice of one of his satraps next year, we fall in our duty to keep America solvent and decent." The only problem with actively supporting Eisenhower was the increasing probability that the General would run on the Republican ticket. But by the beginning of 1952, Freeman had concluded that his own duty required him to endorse Eisenhower even if it meant a final break with the national Democratic party. He justified his open support of a Republican not only on the grounds of Eisenhower's greatness but on the grounds that "it is not a Democratic party we are trying to oust: it is a Labor party,

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<sup>14</sup>DSF to Allen W. Freeman, March 19, 1943, DSFP-LC, Box 49; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Nov. 20, 1946, DSFP-LC, Box 68; Robert H. Ferrell (ed.), The Eisenhower Diaries (New York, 1981), 371; Dwight D. Eisenhower, At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends (Garden City, 1967), 334; Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (New York, 1983), 460; DSF to Dwight D. Eisenhower, July 10, 1948, DSFP-LC, Box 87.

dominated by the C.I.O."<sup>15</sup>

Freeman's public championing of Eisenhower was important in swinging Virginia into the Republican column in the election of 1952. On his 5:45 p.m. radio news commentary on February 8, 1952, Freeman announced that a "very important Eisenhower meeting" would be held that evening at Richmond's John Marshall High School. Since many of the city's Republican leaders favored Senator Robert Taft for the party's nomination, Freeman urged supporters of General Eisenhower to turn out in sufficient strength to "make it certain that the cry will be: 'Eisenhower is the man.'" The response to Freeman's appeal was overwhelming, and Eisenhower received the Old Dominion's support at the Republican National Convention. In September Freeman published an article in Life magazine in which he endorsed Eisenhower for the Presidency and drew parallels between "Ike" and other great captains:

The Confederate tradition survives in the South through no lingering faith in the present-day right of secession but through the emergence in that conflict of men whose virtues made the humblest citizen proud. Every Southerner thought better of himself because he belonged to the society that had produced Robert E. Lee and 'Stonewall' Jackson and Wade Hampton. To that revered companionship, Eisenhower may be admitted. It is of the highest significance that when he

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<sup>15</sup>DSF to Dwight D. Eisenhower, Sept. 6, 1950, DSFP-LC, Box 101; DSF to Robert C. Vose, Nov. 17, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 108; DSF to Harry F. Byrd, Oct. 3, 1951, DSFP-LC, Box 104; DSF to Mrs. LeClaire D. Hunt, July 5, 1952, DSFP-LC, Box 111.

has appeared in the South during the campaign, the crowd impulsively, almost unconsciously, has raised the 'rebel yell,' the pibroch of Southern fealty.

Eisenhower could have received no higher praise from Freeman, and though some readers remained unconvinced, the Life article helped convince some wavering Southerners to break with tradition and vote for a Republican candidate for the first time in their lives. "Like millions of others I have been in a quandary, politically," one Virginian told Freeman. "Your article has helped me to reach a decision. I have long had profound respect for your judgments concerning many things. I shall vote for Eisenhower." Another Virginian wrote to Freeman: "I was greatly pleased with your fine article about Ike in the current issue of Life. With your prestige and influence you have struck a telling blow."<sup>14</sup>

At the time of the election, Freeman was in Madrid, Spain, anxiously awaiting news of the outcome. On September 19, three days before the publication date of the Life article, he had sailed with Inez and Mary Wells Ashworth aboard the U.S.S. United States for Le Havre, France. After touring France, England and Belgium, the party arrived in

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<sup>14</sup>Benjamin Muse, Virginia chapter of Presidential Nominating Politics in 1952 (typed MS), Benjamin Muse Papers, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library; DSF, "Ike Gets the Vote of Southern Historian," Life, Sept. 22, 1952, pp. 53-63; Miles Hammond to DSF, Oct. 28, 1952, Powhatan W. James to DSF, Sept. 19, 1952 and Percy Poe Bishop to DSF, Sept. 20, 1952, all in DSFP-LC, Box 112.

Rome on October 14. There they cast their absentee ballots for the man who had helped to liberate the continent from Fascist oppression. At the Crillon Hotel in Madrid on November 5, word arrived from the American embassy that Eisenhower had been elected. "God be praised for this triumph of American common sense and decency!" Freeman exulted in his diary. After his return to the United States, Freeman received a warm letter of thanks from Eisenhower for his work in organizing the Democrats for Eisenhower-Nixon group. "It made a vitally important contribution to our victory on November 4th," wrote the President-elect, "and I shall always be especially grateful to those who understood the true meaning of our Crusade and placed their country's welfare above party affiliation."<sup>17</sup>

To Freeman, Eisenhower had proved himself the hero by answering the call of duty. As 1952 drew to a close, Freeman could look back with satisfaction at having performed his own duty, both as a chronicler of the past and as a shaper of the future. During the year he had published the fifth volume of his monumental biography of the nation's first great soldier-statesman, and he had boldly bucked Virginia's Democratic tradition to help carry the Old Dominion for Dwight David Eisenhower, the man whom he regarded as America's greatest soldier-statesman of the 20th

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<sup>17</sup>Diary of DSF, Sept. 19-Nov. 20, 1952, DSFP-LC; Dwight D. Eisenhower to DSF, Jan. 14, 1953, DSFP-LC, Box 116.

century. Yet Freeman was never one to rest on his laurels, and with his abiding faith in the gospel of work, he looked forward to another year of service in 1953.



## CHAPTER XVII

### "SOME WORK OF NOBLE NOTE": THE FREEMAN LEGACY

In the years since his retirement from the News Leader, Freeman had continued a wide range of activities. In addition to his work on George Washington and his radio broadcasts, he delivered numerous public addresses and served on the executive boards of several organizations, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the Equitable Life Assurance Society. Despite his rigorous schedule and his advancing years, he continued to enjoy good health. Yet as 1953 dawned, all was not well with Douglas Freeman.

The continuing problems of his son James Douglas were his greatest cause for concern. After seeing service in the United States Navy, J. D. had enrolled at Princeton University, but academic difficulties had forced him to drop out in 1947. The elder Freeman was disappointed but understanding, and he rejoiced later in the year when his son married Janice Miller, an attractive girl from Rye, New York and a graduate of Vassar College. His joy was even greater when J. D. and Janice presented him with a grandson, Douglas Southall Freeman II. Unfortunately, the marriage broke up in 1950, and J. D. soon found himself in a sea of emotional and financial troubles. His father offered him sage counsel and financial assistance, but by 1952 relations between father and son were strained. Douglas was

especially exasperated by J. D.'s refusal to correspond or to acknowledge his parents' financial aid. "When your Mother and I are dead and gone and you reflect on our efforts to show you patience, love and kindness, you will have a remorse that will give you many unhappy hours," he rebuked J. D. at one point. Still, Douglas stood by his son, and after J. D. spent Christmas of 1952 at Westbourne, tensions between the two eased. "I am going to give him my fullest confidence and support for another try," Douglas told Allen Freeman. "I would rather err on that side than on the side of holding off suspiciously to no good end." Since he was determined not to dip into the money he had set aside for Inez in the event of his death, Douglas resolved to accept more paid speaking engagements and write more articles for publication in order to earn more money with which to pay off his son's considerable debts. Characteristically, he did not flinch at the prospect of a heavier work load. "Of course, I shall be compelled to go into high gear again and make a little more money in order to keep him afloat without cutting into what belongs to Inez in my estate," Douglas wrote Allen. "I shall not mind this; I would rather wear out than rust out any time. That

is a sound old maxim."<sup>1</sup>

And so the 66-year-old Freeman swung into high gear with a schedule that would have taxed the endurance of most men half his age. In addition to his work on the sixth volume of George Washington and his radio broadcasts, Freeman's schedule for the first four months of 1953 included six trips to New York City for board meetings and speeches at the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Fort Belvoir, the University of Richmond, the Roanoke Chamber of Commerce, the College of William and Mary, the Armed Forces College, the Richmond Brotherhood Dinner, a women's education association meeting in Williamsburg, the Advertisers' Club of Washington, the VMI Club of Richmond, a symposium at the State University of New York, Columbia College of South Carolina, the Rotary Club of Richmond, Wesleyan University and Battle Abbey. May brought the busiest week yet, with "six broadcasts, four formal speeches, two other meetings, 820 miles of travel, two days of guide service that involved about eight hours of speaking" and, still, 36 hours of work on the Washington. Freeman admitted that the week was one

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<sup>1</sup>DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Feb. 10, Feb. 17, Feb. 19, Feb. 24, 1947, all in DSFP-LC, Box 78; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, April 21, Sept. 8, 1950, both in DSFP-LC, Box 101; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, May 22, June 23, July 26, Aug. 11, Oct. 3, Oct. 29, Nov. 30, 1951, all in DSFP-LC, Box 106; DSF to James Douglas Freeman, Jan. 18, Jan. 31, March 14, March 21, March 27, April 18, April 25, May 7, May 8, May 23, June 13, June 21, Nov. 26, 1952, all in DSFP-LC, Box 111; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, Jan. 7, Jan. 12, 1953, both in DSFP-LC, Box 116.

of the most active he had ever spent, but he was encouraged that he came through the ordeal without exhaustion. "It confirms my hope that if I do not get run down by a motor car or fall back and break my neck, I shall live to complete 'George Washington,'" he wrote his brother. "Put another way, if last week did not kill me, I am not apt to find any physical strain that will." Yet the last week of May brought two out-of-state commencement addresses sandwiched around another trip to New York. The following week brought still another journey to New York for a meeting of the Equitable but also the promise of a quiet summer. Freeman resolved that he never again would allow himself "to be caught in such a jam as the one this spring."<sup>2</sup>

But the rigorous schedule of the spring of 1953 had already taken its toll. During the last week of May, Freeman suffered the first of two attacks of chest pain that he diagnosed himself as angina pectoris or pseudo angina. On Wednesday, June 10, he felt compelled to type instructions for his funeral and place them in his safe-deposit box at the Summit Branch of the State Planters Bank. He remarked at the beginning of these instructions that he had not yet decided whether to tell his physician, Dr. William H. Higgins, Jr., "because he may restrict my movements so severely that I had rather be dead." A

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<sup>2</sup>Diary of DSF, Jan. 1-June 6, 1953, DSFP-LC; DSF to Allen W. Freeman, May 11, June 1, 1953, both in DSFP-LC, Box 116.

friend who saw him that same day "noted a hollowness at his temples and an evident weariness in his face." The aching in his chest continued on Thursday and Friday, but he complained to no one and continued his work on the Washington. Despite his physical condition, he managed 48 hours of work on the biography for the week ending June 12. This brought the total expenditure of time on George Washington to 15,684 hours.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 13, Freeman penned the concluding paragraph of Chapter XVI of the sixth volume of George Washington:

[Washington] was 61 and he complained mildly of waning memory and of poor hearing, but few others saw any evidence of decline, and his daily life showed none, unless it was an increasing disposition to spend too much time on trifling matters of farm management. Was he not mounted and ready for four more years on the road of service to his country? The multitude of his followers and the handful of envious foes would have proclaimed the certainty with joy or reluctantly would have admitted the probability, but there were omens the road would be stormy and cloud-covered, and there were voices prophesying strife.

Normally, Freeman did not revise his manuscript until he had reviewed the entire chapter at a later date. As he lay this paragraph aside, it already bore the marks of careful revision.<sup>4</sup>

Freeman put down his writing board and went downstairs

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<sup>2</sup>DSF, typed statement, June 10, 1953, DSFP-LC, Box 244; NL, June 15, 1953; Diary of DSF, June 7-12, 1953, DSFP-LC.

<sup>4</sup>DSF, George Washington, VI, xlii, 384.

for lunch. His associate Mary Wells Ashworth recalled "laughter at the luncheon table and talk of many things," after which Freeman went back upstairs for his customary nap. About 3 p.m. he suffered a paroxysm of pain so severe that he asked Inez to call Dr. Higgins. The doctor rushed to Westbourne and found Freeman holding a lily and jestingly asking if that were not the proper way to depart the world. Freeman continued to jest while Dr. Higgins performed an electrocardiogram. The EKG revealed a serious heart condition. Upon the arrival of Higgins' father, Dr. W. H. Higgins, Sr., the younger physician left the room to phone the Medical College of Virginia Hospital. In the meantime, at about 4 p.m., Freeman developed a massive coronary occlusion and lapsed into a coma. At 4:20 p.m., before he could be moved to a hospital, Douglas Freeman was pronounced dead.<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with his written instructions, Freeman's body lay in state at Westbourne with the strains of Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" playing in the background. The funeral took place on Tuesday, June 16, at Second Baptist Church, with the Reverend Theodore F. Adams and the Reverend

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., xlii; Douglas Southall Freeman, 1883 [sic] - 1953: Minutes of Meeting and Resolution by the News Leader Current Events Class, Commonwealth Club, June 15, 1953 [Richmond, 1953], n.p.; NL, June 15, 1953; Guy Friddell, "Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman," University of Richmond Alumni Bulletin (Summer, 1953), 2; Charles Henry Hamilton, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met," Reader's Digest (July, 1960), 154.

Reno S. Harp, Jr. presiding. The requested hymns, "The Strife Is O'er" and "Welcome, Happy Morning," were sung. Freeman was laid to rest in Hollywood Cemetery among the mortal remains of men whose deeds he had helped to immortalize in his Confederate histories.<sup>4</sup>

Freeman's wide-ranging influence was reflected in the outpouring of heartfelt grief at the news of his passing. The eloquent Allan Nevins found himself at a loss for words. "How can friends of your husband adequately express their grief, or members of the historical fraternity their sense of loss?" he asked in a letter to Inez Freeman. Samuel Elliot Morison was succinct: "I can say truly that Douglas was the greatest American historian of our times." The military felt as deep a sense of loss as the historical profession. "Too few of his fellow citizens had the privilege of knowing Dr. Freeman personally, but thousands felt that through his works they had met a man who understood best the principles and could explain and interpret most perfectly the acts of men which made our country great," wrote General Lewis B. Hershey. "It would be difficult indeed to name another who has so thoroughly established himself as the sincere exponent of true national values." General Paul D. Harkins wrote from Korea: "Many of the great military leaders of today have been guided by the

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<sup>4</sup>DSF, typed statement, June 10, 1953, DSFP-LC, Box 244; Theodore F. Adams to Inez G. Freeman, June 22, 1953, DSFP-LC, Box 125.

lessons he discussed in his many histories and biographies."

Senator Harry Byrd wrote to Mary Wells Ashworth: "I am terribly distressed at the death of my dear friend, Douglas Freeman. I have been associated with him for more than a quarter of a century, and, while we have not always agreed, I had for him the most profound admiration and respect."

Even those who had known him only a short time were stunned by Freeman's death. A North Carolina businessman and history enthusiast wrote to Inez: "The passing of Dr.

Freeman was a great shock to me and a distinct loss to the entire world. I had known him personally only about two years, but had learned to love him. He was always so courteous, so helpful and so pleasant -- rare traits in such a very busy man."<sup>7</sup>

During his lifetime, Freeman enjoyed an almost unparalleled reputation as a historian, not only among the general reading public but within the academic community as well. The few voices that expressed reservations about his work were drowned in the sea of praise. After his death, some scholars began to take a more critical look at his historical writings. Most scholarly criticism of Freeman's work has focused on his writings about Robert E. Lee. In

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<sup>7</sup>Allan Nevins to Inez G. Freeman, June 28, 1953, Samuel Eliot Morison to Inez G. Freeman, July 9, 1953, Lewis B. Hershey to Inez G. Freeman, June 16, 1953, Paul D. Harkins to Inez G. Freeman, June 20, 1953, all in DSFP-LC, Box 124; Harry F. Byrd to Mary Wells Ashworth, June 19, 1953, DSFP-LC, Box 120; John R. Peacock, Sr. to Inez G. Freeman, DSFP-LC, Box 124.



general, the scholars who have found the most fault with Freeman's work have been those most unsympathetic to Lee. T. Harry Williams, one of the first to attempt an appraisal of Freeman as a Civil War historian, concluded that the "problem of Freeman cannot be separated from the problem of Lee" because Freeman "was a Virginia gentleman writing about a Virginia gentleman." Thus, in Williams' view, Lee's limitations as a commander were also Freeman's limitations as a historian of the Civil War. Williams found "a curious parallel" between Freeman and Lee in their desire "to tell the truth without hurting." Freeman, Williams maintained, tried to be objective, but "a gentleman historian speaks the hard truth no more than a gentleman general." Both Freeman and his hero held to "the old tournament notion of war" and failed to realize that the Civil War "marked a transition from the older, leisurely, limited-objective kind of war to the all-out for keeps, ruthless, total war of modern times." And both the general and the historian, Williams argued, held too narrow a view of the Civil War. Lee always focused his attention on the war in his native state. This preoccupation with the Eastern theater was Lee's "tragic limitation," in Professor Williams' opinion. "Freeman did not recognize Lee's limitation because to him too the war is in Virginia," Williams contended. "It did not occur to him to examine the effects of Lee's preoccupation with Virginia on total

Confederate strategy. Nor did he see the tragic result of Lee's limitation."<sup>a</sup>

Williams focused his critique of the biographer and his subject on technical military matters. Writing some two decades later, Thomas Lawrence Connelly, in his study The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society, echoed many of Williams' criticisms but also questioned Freeman's presentation of Lee the man. As his subtitle indicated, Connelly was primarily concerned with the Lee image and those who had molded it. No one did more to shape the image of Lee as a hero for middle-class America than did Freeman. Like Williams, Professor Connelly expressed high admiration for Freeman's scholarship and literary skill. Yet, for Connelly, these very qualities had a negative impact in the sense that they served to seal the old image of Lee. "His scholarship wrapped Lee in an almost impregnable mantle and deterred further examination of his career," Connelly affirmed. "Freeman deliberately discouraged probing into Lee's personality, and scorned those who would do so." Connelly himself took issue with Freeman's assertion that Lee was a simple gentleman and sought to probe what he regarded as a complex personality. The Lee who emerged from Connelly's pen was a frustrated man. Among his chief frustrations was his unsatisfactory

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<sup>a</sup>Williams, Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams, 185-87, 191-94.

marriage to Mary Custis, a spoiled woman whose unpleasant personality was exacerbated by poor health. Lee loved his children, but he sensed that he had failed them as a father. He knew that his own father and his half-brother had plunged the family into debt and disgrace and feared that his long absences from home on military duty made him a failure in his desire to restore the family honor. Moreover, Lee believed that he was a failure as a man. Most of his career in the United States Army was spent in isolated outposts that deepened his sense of homesickness for his beloved Virginia. Promotion was slow. Lee's sense of failure reflected his deeper distrust of himself and his feeling of unworthiness. For Connelly, this sense of self-failure and self-distrust was crucial to an understanding of Lee. Far from being the simple soul portrayed by Freeman, Lee was actually an unfulfilled man who hid his inner frustrations and doubts behind a mask of serene reserve. Lee's personal code of duty, self-control and self-denial was, in Connelly's view, "an almost mechanical device that suppressed his naturally strong temper and vibrant personality." Connelly speculated that Lee found a release for his repressed emotions in combat and thus attributed the sometimes reckless aggressiveness of the general on the battlefield to the struggles within the man. In Connelly's interpretation, then, deep storms did rage beneath Lee's untroubled exterior and had a profound impact

upon his performance as a commander.<sup>9</sup>

Although Williams, admirer of Grant and of Lincoln, and Connelly, historian of the Army of Tennessee, were undoubtedly influenced by their own biases in their critiques of Lee and his biographer, some of their criticism was valid. Williams exaggerated the similarities between the historian and his subject. Freeman and Lee were both deeply attached to Virginia, and they shared many "gentlemanly" traits. But Freeman was not Lee. In fact, in his ambition and his passion for order and system, he much more closely resembled his portrait of young George Washington than his portrait of Lee. As Joseph H. Harrison, Jr. noted in reply to Williams, "Lee, for all his efficiency and industry, seems self-effacing, almost easy-going," when compared with young Washington or with Freeman. Yet Freeman's deep love and admiration for Lee -- inherited from his father, strengthened by his Richmond upbringing and affirmed by his own study -- made it impossible for him to be totally objective in writing the General's biography. Almost inevitably, he was, in Williams' words, "a little too worshipful of Lee."<sup>10</sup>

Freeman was honest in his scholarship, but his tendency

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<sup>9</sup>Connelly, The Marble Man, xiv-xv, 6-10, 151-52, 163-219.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph H. Harrison, Jr., "Harry Williams, Critic of Freeman: A Demurrer," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Jan., 1956), 72; Williams, Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams, 190.

to worship Lee caused him to be protective of his hero. While researching his doctoral dissertation on Freeman in the 1960s, John Gignilliat discovered one instance in which the biographer's protectiveness led him to misjudge, and for a time to suppress, evidence that appeared to contradict his portrait of Lee as a moral hero. In 1935, just after publication of R. E. Lee, Freeman acquired a letter written by Lee a century before, while the 28-year-old lieutenant was engaged in a surveying expedition near the Canadian border on Lake Erie. Most of the letter, addressed to Lieutenant George Washington Cullum, was of little significance, but it contained a reference to an encounter between Lee's party and a Canadian lighthouse keeper. "We were warm & excited, he irascible & full of venom," Lee had written. "An altercation ensued which resulted in his death. . . . I hope it will not be considered that we have lopped from the Government a useful member, but on the contrary -- to have done it some service, as the situation may now be more efficiently filled & we would advise the New Minister to make choice of a better Subject than a d----d Canadian Snake." Freeman did nothing with the letter until a decade later, when he received an inquiry from Milo Milton Qualfe of the Detroit Public Library, who had secured a copy of the potentially damaging excerpt concerning the lighthouse incident. Qualfe questioned the letter's authenticity. Freeman confirmed that the letter had been

written by Lieutenant Lee but offered his own interpretation of Lee's role in the apparent murder. "I want to say, also, that the internal evidence seems to suggest that the lighthouse keeper was killed by General Lee's companion," he wrote. "My reason for saying that is that General Lee throughout his life always acknowledged his own responsibilities, but when responsibilities were coupled with someone else, he took pains to use an indirect form of discourse that would not put the blame on the other man though the language was so shaped that he did not, himself, assume the blame." Freeman told Qualfe that he intended to publish the letter in the next printing of R. E. Lee, but he never did so. His only published reference to the letter was a brief footnote in the 1949 printing of the Lee that mentioned the "unhappy incident" of "the accidental death of a Canadian lighthouse keeper 'in a scuffle' over the use of his tower for running one of the survey lines." Even if Freeman's interpretation of the incident were correct, the affair deserved a fuller treatment than it received from the biographer who had declared his intention to record "every known, important fact" about General Lee. Freeman's protectiveness led him to compromise. He published the brief, somewhat cryptic, footnote and saved the letter and there left the matter to time and a future generation of

historians.<sup>11</sup>

Ironically, as Gignilliat eventually discovered, Freeman's protectiveness actually led him to misinterpret the letter and thus drastically inflate its importance. Gignilliat conducted his own research into the incident and found no evidence in any Canadian records that any such murder had ever taken place. He concluded that Lee and his party had quite literally killed "a d----d Canadian Snake" -- a venomous reptile. The jocular tone of the letter as a whole would seem to make such a conclusion inescapable, at least to one so familiar with Lee's literary style and sense of humor as Freeman. Gignilliat attributed Freeman's misinterpretation of the letter to several factors but primarily to his intense protectiveness of Lee as a moral hero. When confronted with a letter that appeared on the surface to contradict his portrait of Lee, Freeman compromised and thus fell victim to Lee's joke and to his own hero worship.<sup>12</sup>

That Freeman was a hero worshiper can hardly be denied. The literary scholar Louis D. Rubin, Jr. applied the label to him but not in a pejorative sense. "He believed in heroes, in men who were significantly brave, significantly resolute, significantly idealistic, who in the possession of

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<sup>11</sup>John Lewis Gignilliat, "A Historian's Dilemma: A Posthumous Footnote for Freeman's R. E. Lee," Journal of Southern History (May, 1977), 217-226.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 226-36.

such qualities towered above the ordinary run of compromised, 'real life' mortals," Rubln said of Freeman. Rubln surmised that Freeman, finding nothing especially heroic in his day-to-day study of current affairs, turned to his study of the past. And there, particularly in the story of Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, he found men who met the test of true heroes. Freeman, of course, had contemporary heroes -- John Stewart Bryan, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight D. Eisenhower -- but he found in the history of the Confederacy men whose strength of character, valor and fortitude made them heroes for the ages.<sup>12</sup>

Freeman's worship of the Confederacy's heroes, and especially of Lee, was part of the faith with which he had been raised. He sought to transmit that faith to new generations through his historical writings. Although he openly venerated the heroes about whom he wrote, he would have denied that his writings were haglography, for haglographers "did not write to establish fact but to confirm faith." Confirming faith in the heroic character of Lee and his army was also Freeman's goal, but he never doubted that his faith would be confirmed by establishing the facts. As John Gignilliat has noted, Freeman refused to recognize any potential conflict between his love for

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<sup>12</sup>Louis Decimus Rubln, Jr., Richmond as a Literary Capital: An Address Given Before Friends of the Richmond Public Library in the Library at First and Franklin Streets in Richmond, Virginia, on April 10, 1962 (Richmond, 1966), 17-18.



the Confederacy's heroes and his desire to write scientifically accurate history.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Freeman never doubted that the story of Lee and his army was a dramatic one, and he saw no conflict between the scientific gathering of facts and the dramatic presentation of them. It was his attempt to create a sense of the dramatic, primarily through the "fog of war" device, that left Freeman open to the criticisms of T. Harry Williams and others who felt that he sacrificed clarity and context for the sake of drama. "The military biographer is depicting a scene in which his subject plays a dominating role," Williams maintained. "He has to tell enough of the scene to make the role intelligible. If he has to sacrifice drama in the process, so be it. After all, he is recounting an historical episode, not writing a story for the Saturday Evening Post." Williams also criticized Freeman for his failure to relate Lee's military thought and actions to military developments before and after the Civil War: "In Freeman's volumes it is as though Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia are wrenched out of the context of military history to be presented brilliantly in a kind of historical void." For Williams, then, drama and literary artistry were secondary to clear exposition and comparative analysis in writing military biography. Freeman intended

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<sup>14</sup>Herold, "A Species of Literary Lion," 147; DSF, "Adventure in Biography," DSFP-LC, Box 127; Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 150-51, 282-83, 465.

R. E. Lee and Lee's Lieutenants to be a factual record of the Army of Northern Virginia and its commander, but he had the dual intention of telling a dramatic story that would move and inspire the widest possible audience. If, as a product of the Johns Hopkins seminars in history, he was painstaking in the scientific gathering of facts, he was also, as a product of Richmond's Confederate celebration with a natural flair for the dramatic, equally painstaking in the artistic presentation of those facts. The writer Allen Tate agreed with Williams that Freeman's characters moved in a sort of void, removed from both the enemy and the people of the South, but he understood this as part of Freeman's artistic intention:

Lee's army is here cut off forever in a kind of "cold pastoral" not only from the time of its action but from all history: it has become assimilated to a very great poetic convention, that of the Golden Age, in which we may all, North and South, and men everywhere, participate, a Platonic world in which historical men achieve a Homeric stature....

I am suggesting that in addition to the solid knowledge of his period that Mr. Freeman gives us, he has something of the sensibility of a poet; but of this I suspect he is unaware; and I am not sure that he ought to be aware of it. Never mind; he will not be. Too many people have told him that he is a historian -- which, of course, he is.<sup>15</sup>

Freeman was a historian -- perhaps with the sensibility of a poet, certainly with a sense of the dramatic -- but,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 462-63; Williams, Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams, 189, 192; Allen Tate, "Cold Pastoral," New Republic, May 10, 1943, p. 644.

above all, he was a teacher. Although he abandoned the notion of a career in education, nothing in life interested him more than teaching his fellow men. And though he also abandoned his early intention to become a minister, a major goal of his historical work was to impart the moral lessons he found in his study of great figures from America's past. If his emphasis on the didactic, like his emphasis on the heroic and the dramatic, makes Freeman's work less appealing to many scholars of a later generation, the thoroughness of his research and the beauty of his presentation set standards that all historians are challenged to meet.<sup>14</sup>

Freeman also set high standards as a man of public affairs. Although more given to informing than to crusading, his editorial voice reached more Virginians than any other of his generation. At the time of his retirement from the News Leader, Freeman told his associate James J. Kilpatrick that editorial writing was mere "writing on sand." Yet his career as a journalist, both as a newspaperman and as a radio broadcaster, allowed him to fulfill his ambition to influence the thinking of his fellow citizens on public questions. R. E. Lee, Lee's Lieutenants and George Washington assured Freeman his place in history, but his News Leader editorials left a permanent record of the views of a leading Southern moderate and independent

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<sup>14</sup>—[James Jackson Kilpatrick], Address at the Dedication of Douglas Southall Freeman High School, Richmond, Va., Nov. 15, 1954, DSFP-LC, Box 226.

Virginia Democrat.<sup>17</sup>

In his work as a historian and as a Journalist, Freeman's views were shaped by his faith in the traditional values he acquired in his youth -- religious conviction, reverence for heroes, devotion to duty, self-control, fortitude, industry, thrift. These were essentially the values of the 19th-century Victorians, and it is not surprising that Freeman kept a quotation from one of his favorite literary Victorians in a little red leather frame on his desk. From Tennyson's "Ulysses," it summarized Freeman's ambition in life:

. . . something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.

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'Tis not too late to seek a newer World.  
. . . my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths  
Of all the western stars until I die.

Values change with time. A generation with less faith in heroes, especially moral heroes, may question Freeman's view of the past. To a generation coming of age after the New Deal and the Second Reconstruction, views on public questions that Freeman considered to be liberal, or at least moderate, may sound staunchly conservative. Yet in the thoroughness of his search for facts, the clarity of his thinking and his literary craftsmanship, there is much for anyone to admire. By keeping faith with his own values,

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<sup>17</sup>NL, June 15, 1953; Kilpatrick, "Richmond Stayed Staid," 204.

Douglas Freeman fulfilled his ambition to produce lasting work of noble note.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Gignilliat, "Thought of DSF," 152-55; Geneva B. Snelling, "Douglas Southall Freeman" (typed MS, Oct., 1954), DSFP-LC, Box 123, pp. 2-3; NL, June 15, 1953.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Although Douglas Freeman denied that he was worthy of a biography, he left a vast quantity of material for anyone wishing to examine his life. Most of his personal papers are in the Douglas Southall Freeman Papers in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. This collection comprises 244 boxes of material -- some 70,000 items -- and provides an insight into Freeman's passion for organization. The most valuable part of the collection consists of Freeman's personal correspondence. Freeman filed virtually all of the letters he received and copies of those he sent. Although he rarely wrote long letters, the correspondence files form an invaluable source for his views, especially on contemporary affairs. The Freeman Papers also contain his diaries for the years 1902, 1907 and 1936-1953. The diaries of the adult Freeman are primarily records of his writing schedule and thus reveal his reverence for time and the importance of work. Occasionally, the diary entries contain revealing insights into other aspects of Freeman's life. Transcripts and copies of many of his speeches and articles are also in the Freeman Papers, as are his handwritten drafts of his historical works. Various miscellaneous items, such as recollections of Freeman by relatives and friends and the minutes of the News Leader Current Events Class, are also

useful.

The other major collection of Freeman papers is the Douglas Southall Freeman Collection, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md. This collection consists primarily of correspondence between Freeman and his parents during his years in graduate school at Johns Hopkins and are essential for an understanding of his early views, many of which changed little during the course of his life. The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va., has some other important Freeman papers, including the Freeman Family Scrapbook, 1886-1923, a copy of the memoirs of Walker Burford Freeman and a typescript of "John Stewart Bryan," Douglas Freeman's only major unpublished work and his tribute to his longtime friend and boss.

Since Freeman's correspondence files are so nearly complete, most other manuscript collections I consulted are of little use to a study of Freeman. An important exception is the correspondence between Freeman and W. J. De Renne, concerning the publication of Lee's Dispatches, in the De Renne Family Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. Other manuscript collections that yielded comment about Freeman are the William Munford Tuck Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., and the Henry Sydnor Harrison

Papers and Benjamin Muse Papers, both in the Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

The most important source for an analysis of Freeman's views on public questions is the microfilm file of the Richmond News Leader, the newspaper that he edited from 1915 until 1949. Although he was not a crusading editor, the fact that the News Leader had more daily circulation than any other newspaper in Virginia during Freeman's editorship makes his editorials an important record of opinion on state, national and international, as well as local, issues. And thanks to microfilm, his journalistic career was not merely "writing on sand."

Important as was his editorial career, it was his "second career" as a historian that brought him his largest measure of renown outside Virginia. His historical works thus form another major source for his biography. Foremost among them are R. E. Lee: A Biography, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934-35) and Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942-44). R. E. Lee, though not the final word on the subject, is likely to remain the most complete account of Lee's life. Certainly no future biographer of the General can afford to ignore it. Lee's Lieutenants was Freeman's personal favorite among all of his works because of the difficulties of organization that it presented. It is essentially institutional history told from a biographical



perspective, which shows Freeman's belief in the importance of personality in history. It is not a history of the Army of Northern Virginia as such, but anyone studying that army, whether from the standpoint of the high command or of the men in the ranks, will benefit from the fact that Freeman applied his own rigorous standards of scholarship to the subject first.

George Washington: A Biography, 7 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948-57) never achieved quite the level of acclaim from either the reading public or the critics that Lee and Lee's Lieutenants did. Certainly Freeman himself, while he admired Washington greatly, never loved him as he loved Lee. Nor did he seem at home in the 18th-century world, a fact pointed out by more than one reviewer of George Washington. In the quenchless ambition of his ordered mind, Freeman may have more closely resembled Washington than Lee, but his deepest values were those of the 19th century, not the 18th or the 20th. Perhaps the greatest failing of the Washington is the lack of a final summation of the man along the lines of "The Pattern of a Life" in R. E. Lee. Death denied Freeman the opportunity for such a summation. The final volume of the biography was ably written by his associates, John Alexander Carroll and Mary Wells Ashworth, who adhered faithfully to Freeman's high standards and his concept of biography. Yet Carroll and Ashworth did not attempt a final assessment of

Washington. Whatever its shortcomings, Freeman's Washington, like his Lee and Lee's Lieutenants, makes the task of any future biographer immeasurably easier.

Other published works by Freeman include: A Calendar of Confederate Papers . . . (Richmond: The Confederate Museum, 1908); Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A., to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65 . . . (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915); The Last Parade: An Editorial by Douglas S. Freeman From "Richmond News Leader" of Friday, June twenty-fourth Nineteen hundred and thirty-two, the last day of the forty-second annual reunion of the United Confederate Veterans (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1932); and The South to Posterity: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939). Often overlooked is his only book written specifically for young readers, Lee of Virginia (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). It illustrates in simplified form Freeman's skills as a storyteller and his belief in Lee as a moral hero for Americans. For adult readers who, like the matronly woman in one of Freeman's favorite New Yorker cartoons, admit to having bitten off a little more R. E. Lee than they can chew, there is Richard Barksdale Harwell's Lee: An Abridgement in One Volume of the Four-Volume R. E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,

1961). Harwell also abridged Freeman's Washington: Douglas Southall Freeman, Washington: An Abridgement in One Volume, by Richard Harwell, of the Seven-Volume George Washington (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).

Surprisingly, no published, book-length study of Freeman yet exists. The longest, most perceptive study yet to appear is John Lewis Gignilliat, "The Thought of Douglas Southall Freeman" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1968). Gignilliat's dissertation is particularly good on Freeman's early life and the forces that shaped his thoughts on history and public questions. Yet except for a discussion of Lee's Lieutenants and some occasional references to other topics, Gignilliat ends his study in 1935. That was a significant year in Freeman's life, especially in terms of his political orientation, but by concluding his study there, Gignilliat not only omits nearly two decades of Freeman's life but makes the change in his political views seem somewhat more drastic than in fact they were. Still, Gignilliat's work is an extremely useful secondary source for any study of Freeman's life and career. Gignilliat summarizes his views on Freeman and includes some discussion of George Washington in his entry on Freeman in The Dictionary of Literary Biography, XVII, 157-69. Another unpublished study that provides some insight into Freeman's career as a historian is David Edward Herold, "A Species of Literary Lion: Essays on Morison, Freeman, De Voto, and

Becker and the Writing of History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1973).

Freeman is the subject of several articles written during his lifetime and after. Among those that appeared while he was still alive are: "Virginia Editor Uses Civil War to Clarify War News from Europe," Life (May 13, 1940), 41-47; "The Virginians," Time (Oct. 18, 1948), 108-18, which is a cover story; and George F. Scheer, "Plutarch on the James," The Southern Packet: A Monthly Review of Southern Books and Ideas (Feb., 1949), 1-4.

Among the articles and essays about Freeman that appeared after his death are: Guy Friddell, "Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman," University of Richmond Alumni Bulletin (Summer, 1953), 2-3, 18; Frank E. Vandiver, "Douglas Southall Freeman, May 16, 1886-June 13, 1953," Southern Historical Society Papers (1953), v-xiv; Dumas Malone, "The Pen of Douglas Southall Freeman" and Mary Wells Ashworth, "A Prefatory Note," both in DSF, George Washington: A Biography, VI (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), ix-xxxi and xxxv-xlv; Charles Henry Hamilton, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met," Reader's Digest (July, 1960), 149-54; Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, "Douglas Southall Freeman: My Father as a Writer," Richmond Literature and History Quarterly (Spring, 1979), 33-41; Mary Wells Ashworth, "Douglas Southall Freeman: 'Prospector of the Past,'" Richmond Quarterly (Spring, 1984), 30-39; and Mary

Tyler Freeman Cheek, "Reflections," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Jan., 1986), 25-39. Essays on Freeman by Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek, Mary Wells Ashworth and Harry M. Ward are published together in Robert A. Armour (ed.), Douglas Southall Freeman: Reflections by His Daughter, His Research Associate, and a Historian (Richmond: Friends of the Richmond Public Library, 1986).

Articles that deal with more specific aspects of Freeman's work as a historian include: Thomas Harry Williams, "Freeman, Historian of the Civil War: An Appraisal," Journal of Southern History (Feb., 1955), 91-100, which is reprinted in Williams, The Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 185-94; Joseph H. Harrison, Jr., "Harry Williams, Critic of Freeman: A Demurrer," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Jan., 1956), 70-77; "How a Great Historian Studied a Great American: The Freeman Letters on George Washington," with an introduction by Allan Nevins, American Heritage (Feb., 1956), 65-71; Robert Partin, "Biography as an Instrument of Moral Instruction," American Quarterly (Winter, 1956), 303-15; John Lewis Gignilliat, "A Historian's Dilemma: A Posthumous Footnote for Freeman's R. E. Lee," Journal of Southern History (May, 1977), 217-36; and William Harris Bragg, "'Our Joint Labor,' W. J. De Renne, Douglas Southall Freeman, and Lee's Dispatches, 1910-1915," Virginia Magazine of History and

Biography (Jan., 1989), 3-32. See also Richard Barksdale Harwell's Introduction to the reprint edition of DSF, The South to Posterity (Wendell, N.C.: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1983).

Freeman is undoubtedly the model for at least two fictional characters, Dr. Queed in Henry Sydnor Harrison's Queed (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1911) and Payson Curle in Emily Clark's Stuffed Peacocks (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

In the last two decades, the harshest critiques of Freeman's work as a Civil War historian have come from the pen of Thomas Lawrence Connelly. In The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) and God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), the latter co-authored with Barbara L. Bellows, Connelly criticizes Freeman for sealing the traditional image of Lee put forth by an earlier generation of Virginia writers. In The Marble Man, he also takes issue with Freeman's portrait of Lee as a simple Christian gentleman and offers his own provocative psychological portrait of the General. Connelly's brief treatment raises more questions than it answers, but his work shows that there is room for a new interpretation of Lee. While a new study might benefit from the psychoanalytic techniques Freeman detested, it will also benefit from Freeman's own

diligence in ferreting out the details of Lee's life and his analysis of Lee's generalship. Connelly's student William Garrett Piston echoes much of his mentor's criticism of Freeman and of Lee in his Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

More judicious in their criticism than Connelly and Piston are Marshall William Fishwick and Louis Decimus Rubin, Jr. See Fishwick's Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959) and Rubin's Richmond as a Literary Capital: An Address Given Before the Friends of the Richmond Public Library at First and Franklin Streets in Richmond, Virginia, on April 10, 1962 (Richmond: Friends of the Richmond Public Library, 1966), as well as his essay "Shelby Foote's Civil War" in A Gallery of Southerners (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

I consulted a number of books for a better understanding of the South during Freeman's lifetime. Among the most informative are: Gaines Milligan Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Comer Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); George Brown Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,

1967); and V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Vintage Books, 1949).

On Southern race relations during Freeman's lifetime, see: Morton Sosna, In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); John T. Kneebone, Southern Liberal Journalists and the Issue of Race, 1920-1944 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and Charles W. Eagles, Jonathan Daniels and Race Relations: The Evolution of a Southern Liberal (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982). Raymond Gavins, The Perils and Prospects of Southern Black Leadership: Gordon Blaine Hancock, 1884-1970 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1977) is a useful study of one of Richmond's leading black citizens of Freeman's era.

On Virginia, Allen Wesley Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) and Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) are good studies of the period they cover. For later periods, see Ronald Lynton Heinemann, Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983) and J. Harvie Wilkinson III, Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968). See also Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New



Dominion (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), as well as Dabney's personal memoirs, Across the Years: Memories of a Virginian (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978).

Some of the best work on the Old Dominion in the 20th century has come in the form of biographies. The closest thing to a political synthesis of 20th-century Virginia is Edward Younger and James Tice Moore (eds.), The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), which contains brief biographies of the state's chief executives. Good full-length biographies of Virginia governors include: William E. Larsen, Montague of Virginia: The Making of a Southern Progressive (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); Henry C. Ferrell, Jr., Claude A. Swanson of Virginia: A Political Biography (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985); Jack Temple Kirby, Westmoreland Davis: Virginia Planter-Politician, 1859-1942 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968); and William Bryan Crawley, Bill Tuck: A Political Life in Harry Byrd's Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978). See also Bruce J. Dierenfield, Keeper of the Rules: Congressman Howard W. Smith of Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987) and Virginius Dabney, Dry Messiah: The Life of Bishop Cannon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949). Surprisingly, there is no published, book-length biography of Harry Flood Byrd, the

dominant figure in 20th-century Virginia politics. Until such a work appears, readers will have to rely upon Robert T. Hawkes's essay on Byrd in The Governors of Virginia and on numerous articles, many of which have appeared in the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. A most valuable survey of recent work on 20th-century Virginia that includes a discussion of the periodical literature on the Byrd era is Ronald Lynton Helnemann, "Virginia in the Twentieth Century: Recent Interpretations," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (April, 1986), 131-60.

## VITA

John R. Peacock III was born on August 1, 1957 in High Point, North Carolina. In 1979 he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. After receiving a Master of Arts degree from Virginia Tech in 1981, he received an Alumni Federation Fellowship to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Louisiana State University. He has taught American history at Louisiana State and will begin teaching at Texas A & M University in 1991.

## DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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Major Field: History

Title of Dissertation: Keeping the Faith: Douglas Southall Freeman, 1886-1953

Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman

*H. K. ...*

Dean of the Graduate School

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Date of Examination:

November 14, 1990